

SC Mental Health Commission Chair and DMH State Director Increase Mental Health Awareness in Hartsville

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Hartsville Kiwanis Club



State Director John H. Magill addresses Hartsville Kiwanis Club

October 20, 2016, South Carolina Department of Mental Health (DMH) State Director John H. Magill shared stories of the history of the Department and outlined the current scope of the Agency with the Hartsville Kiwanis Club, which was attended by approximately 45 community leaders. With the assistance of DMH Commission Chair Alison Evans, PsyD, and Pee Dee Mental Health Center Executive Director Pat Bresnan, Magill took audience questions, discussing topics including further potential expansion of the Department's telepsychiatry services, homelessness in relation to

mental illness, and school-based services. Magill stressed that school-based services are especially important since they allow certified counselors to identify problems and treat children at young ages in environments in which they feel comfortable. The Kiwanis member who raised the issue agreed, adding that school-based services are an excellent use of resources. The final audience question was, "What should people do if they see someone who needs mental health help?" Bresnan advised directing him or her to the local mental health center, where they can walk-in and typically be seen by a mental health professional the same day.

Dr. Evans appreciates Mr. Magill has spoken to more than 50 civic clubs over the past few years: "I think there is a huge lack of understanding about the work of the Department; these events are vital to helping increase knowledge of our mission, thereby increasing support while reducing stigma for those seeking treatment," she said.

Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

Following the Kiwanis meeting, Dr. Evans and Mr. Magill met with leaders of Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center to discuss the Department's Telepsychiatry program, which was recently implemented in the Hospital's emergency department.

The Hospital has had telepsychiatry only a few months, but has already received approximately 50



(L to R) Director of Nursing Danny Wharton , Nurse Director of Emergency Services Sharon Wilson, RN, State Director John H. Magill, Commission Chair Alison Evans, PsyD, and Tim Browne, CEO, Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

consultations. Nurse Director of Emergency Services Sharon Wilson said, “We can feel relief already, Telepsychiatry gives the ER physicians peace of mind. They can rely on the advice of the DMH board-certified psychiatrist as to whether a patient should be admitted or released. Previously, doctors felt they had to err on the side of caution, which led to holding patients for long amounts of time. The quality of the consults is very high and the patients seem to love it. Telepsychiatry is novel, effective, user friendly, and quick and easy to learn and operate.”

Dr. Evans is also a fan of the Telepsychiatry Program. She said, “The Telepsychiatry Program has greatly increased accessibility to mental health services, reduced waiting times in EDs, increased accuracy of diagnosis and development of more appropriate treatment plans, all while lowering overall costs for hospitals. Better patient care and cost efficiency--wonderful! I'm so happy our local hospital has added Telepsychiatry and that it is working well for them. My husband, a family practice physician with privileges at Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center, was a huge advocate in getting telepsychiatry started in this ED.”

South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics



South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics

In addition to being Chair of the South Carolina Mental Health Commission, Dr. Evans is the Mental Health/Wellness counselor for the South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics (GSSM), located in downtown Hartsville. She handles student mental health issues and teaches a class called Life & Leisure, which addresses the many issues involved in adjusting to life at GSSM, life skills in general, and personal growth. Dr. Evans said, “We focus on developing the students' Emotional Quotients

to go along with those high Intelligence Quotients they already have!”

The South Carolina GSSM invites gifted students from all over South Carolina to complete their junior and senior years of high school there. “Reaching out to others and sharing what you have is a virtue and our mission,” said GSSM President Hector Flores during a meeting with Dr. Evans and Magill.

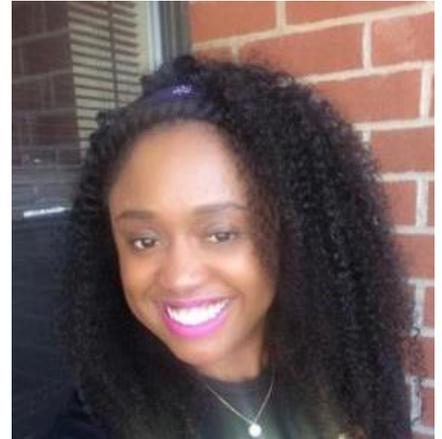
According to President Flores, the majority of GSSM graduates, 120 – 140 per year, go on to attend the University of South Carolina, Clemson University, or the College of Charleston. While those are fine schools, he expressed a desire to increase counseling and



(L to R) Commission Chair Alison Evans, PsyD, GSSM President Hector Flores, State Director John H. Magill

encouragement for more GSSM graduates to attend out-of-state colleges and universities. Although he has only been at the GSSM for a short time, he has already boosted counseling efforts and monitoring of alumni success. When asked about Dr. Evans he said, “She’s great! The students love her and she has been very helpful to me during my time here.”

Later that evening, the GSSM hosted a free event at the Center Theater, inviting students and members of the public to a one-woman show written and performed by Mia Raye Smith: *I am Hope*. The play is a poignant portrayal of a young woman’s journey as she experiences a variety of life’s obstacles, including mental health issues. Ultimately, she takes her first steps toward the path to recovery. Dr. Evans encouraged her students to attend the performance as a means to opening the door to discussing anxiety and depressive disorders, to reduce stigma in seeking help, and to increase empathy for those who may be suffering.



Author and Actress Mia Raye Smith