

Mental Health Monday: Resources Provided by Clark Community Mental Health Center

Bill Pollack

This is Show Me Today, the Voice of Missouri. I'm Bill Pollack. Our Mental Health Monday segment is here once again where we talk about Show Me Hope, which is a free and confidential program that connects community members with resources for financial, social, mental health all across the state. And these programs have been created, throughout the state. So many people, there to help and listen. And one of those is Sarah Johnson, the manager for Show Me Hope at Clark Center, and she joins us now. Hello, Sarah. Nice to talk with you.

Sarah Johnson

Good morning. How are you?

Bill Pollack

Yeah, doing well. So, you've gone out in the community and you've done some fun, creative things. What have the last couple of years been like, though?

Sarah Johnson

It's been a whirlwind. I have done a lot of disaster mental health over the last 20 years, and a pandemic is a very different thing. I've been really fortunate to have an amazing team that works for me, and so we have found our way to make some good out of what we've been going through.

Bill Pollack

Where does Clark Center serve?

Sarah Johnson

We serve Barry, Dade and Lawrence counties.

Bill Pollack

Okay. So that's a good a good area. Yeah. So, you've teamed up with, you work with Show Me Hope and, you've come up with some great things now early in this, series and some of our listeners may remember, we talked with, a woman in Jefferson City that did, burritos for burnout. You did something very similar. You came up with some creative names that all kind of had the same, the same flavor to it. But burgers for burnout, wings for workers. Talk a little bit about, some of those things.

Sarah Johnson

Well, we loved the idea. The really great thing about Show Me Hope is we've been able to communicate with groups all over the state and share great ideas. And so we loved getting ahold of this one. And we have coffee shops. We have all kinds of places, and we wanted to spread out and just see who might grab hold of this idea. And we have lots of target populations, you know, lots of people struggled during, all of the Covid and the changes and the uncertainty.

And so, teachers were a population, servicemen, law enforcement, fire departments, all of these people were target populations. And so, we went to one of our pizza places and talked with them about slices for servicemen. And they really partnered well. They were great. They came up with the idea of coupons so that it wasn't just delivering food one day.

And so they let people donate to that cause and then we delivered a bunch of coupons to their fire department and their police department. We've had coffee shops who provided to teachers, and people could come in and donate money to that. And then there was a special day where they took the coffee and they took it in to one of the schools and, provided that.

So, it's been a nice project. It's always nice to get out and interact. And these were all local businesses, so we also had the opportunity to give back to the local economy and economies, particularly small business definitely struggled in this time. And so it's a great opportunity to get people back out there, back into their local businesses and to support those groups.

Bill Pollock

Yeah. And, you know, feel free to give a plug to some of these small local businesses because it's really a great story how these communities came together and helped each other.

Sarah Johnson

We definitely used your pizza place in Aurora. They are lovely. Mocha Joe's in Monet was really good to work with us. We had some really good partners, and we have a taco truck who I am not sure that we've quite got that one going yet, but we've got another month or so to get ahold of that and see if we can get some. I believe that one was tacos for teachers.

Bill Pollock

I love the names. It's really good. Sarah Johnson is the manager for Show Me Hope at Clark Center. So this is still going on? I mean, even though we're kind of coming out of well, I don't know. You know, Doctor Fauci says we're out of the pandemic, then he kind of backpedals on it. So I really don't know. But this is still going on though in your area. Right?

Sarah Johnson

Yes. I mean, it's really hard to say when you look at the impact of two years of uncertainty and something that nobody could really put their finger on. It's hard to say when that's going to stop impacting people. And I definitely know groups who lost their businesses and groups who are still trying to recoup.

I know that teachers, in some ways, it just kind of rolls over you and we're just getting the "you might be done now" kind of feeling, which allows you to kind of let that barrier drop that you've been trying to hold on to. And so we're seeing people let go of trying to stay strong and start feeling a lot of things from the last two years and all of the changes that we've experienced. So it's definitely still rolling over us.

Bill Pollock

Sarah, over the last couple of years, when we had to socially distance and stay apart, have you felt your community come together?

Sarah Johnson

Yes, I have, I've watched people do what they could to try to support each other. I loved watching people just even plant extra flowers in their front yard so that even if you couldn't go and see them, if you were able to walk outside and be distanced, you could see happy things in the yards. People decorating their front windows for Easter that very first year since Easter was right after we closed everything down so that you could share in that with your neighbors, even if you couldn't go and physically be with them.

It's been really nice to see how people come together. The teachers in, Mount Vernon did a teacher parade, and it was really nice for my boys and I to get to stand in our front yard and see the teachers all in their cars, driving by and waving. They went all through the community so that most of their students would get a chance to wave at them and see their face.

Bill Pollock

Sarah Johnson, the manager for Show Me Hope at Clark Center. You know you're there, your doors are open, you're ready to pick up the phone and answer, anybody that needs help. But you also, you were proactive in this though, too, and came up with ideas to go to the community. And I think that's, impressive of it.

Sarah Johnson

It is a calling. Like I said, it was great, I had a great team, and that was key to being able to keep ourselves together and get ourselves out in places. Pandemic was weird because normally when you do disaster mental health, your feet on the street, you're right out in the middle of whatever the mass casualty or tornado damages.

But in this case, we had to kind of stay back. And so taking my workers into testing sites or vaccination clinics and seeing the difference in that, trying to get into businesses or make phone calls, knock on doors and get information out. Building relationships was interesting. And then just when we did have feet on the street at once, I could see the change in my workers who had become used to this distanced sort of trying to help people.

And then suddenly we're face to face in a new and weird way. It has its draining aspects, but also it's extremely rewarding aspects of getting to see someone, hear their fears, but also see the relief on their face that they got to speak what was going on with them, and vent some frustrations with an actual person. And that was always rewarding. I love disaster work. Disaster and crisis has a lot of benefit to you personally, even if there's a drain to it.

Bill Pollock

Sarah, you talked about the lingering effects or you weren't sure how long this was going to continue. And, whether people turn to Clark Center for Show Me Hope or anywhere around the state, are there things that, family and friends can look forward to see if, I don't want to say warning signs I know you're not a doctor, but, just some things that maybe you can catch to say, hey, you know, I think maybe this person needs a little extra help.

Sarah Johnson

I am a licensed therapist, and warning signs are something we definitely talk about. We talk about noticing that you're pulling away from people, which is a weird thing because we were all told to isolate for a while, but generally in mental health, staying away from people, trying to stay in your home, it really makes symptoms worse if you're starting to form some depression or anxiety. It can

even increase paranoia if you're having some sort of, beginnings of psychosis or something along those lines. And so, isolation can be an issue. And right now we're trying to get back out. So we hope that if people are doing isolating and they're noticing it begins to create more tension, sleep disturbances, changing your eating patterns, losing a lot of weight, gaining a lot of weight, just a fearfulness, a general watching of people. Those are all things that we would say it's time to call one of the phone numbers. I mean, they're 24/7 phone numbers all over the state of Missouri. You can call someone. There's always a mental health professional waiting to talk to you to discuss this, to see how you're doing. You can check in and say, hey, I've been doing this I don't know if I feel good about it, it's starting to concern me. That mental health professional is going to go over that with you. And it's completely free. It's all crisis call. Everybody's got those lines.

I believe 988 has rolled out as a warm line for mental health right now or at a warm roll out. Excuse me? It's not a warm line. So it's not officially up, up but you can use the 988 number right now in the state of Missouri. And that is like your 911, but it's for mental health. It's always available and there's always someone and they are somewhere in your local area. It's not a mental health professional far, far away. It's someone who has some idea of the resources around you.

Bill Pollock

Sarah Johnson is the manager for Show Me Hope at Clark Center. So, you said you've got tacos for teachers coming up. Anything else on the horizon?

Sarah Johnson

We have been working with our schools still, and so we are hoping to get into a few more schools, do a few more groups on wellness and checking in with people, touching base, talking about how we're taking care of ourselves. And we're getting ready to do some farmer's markets. Summer is right around the corner and so we're going to go talk about wellness at the farmer's market, getting out, eating healthy, getting to see people and having coping skills and habits, activities, things along those lines. So we're looking forward to that.

Bill Pollock

Yeah, well Sarah Johnson, best of luck. Keep up the great work. Thank you so much. I appreciate your time. This is Show Me Today the Voice of Missouri.