

## Mental Health Monday: Spreading Hope Around Southeast Missouri

Host

This is Show Me today the Voice of Missouri. Jennifer Hartline is the director of Fund Development and Public Relations for Bootheel Counseling Services. And here on our Mental Health Monday segment. I've spoken with some great people all over the state, and they've done some wonderful work with Show Me Hope, Missouri Crisis Counseling Program, which is available in response to disasters or critical events. And Jennifer is joining us to share some of her success stories with Bootheel Counseling Services. Jennifer, welcome. How big of an area do you cover?

Jennifer Hartline

Well, we are in southeast Missouri, and we cover four counties, which is Scott, Stoddard, Mississippi, and New Madrid in the bootheel region.

Host

Yeah. Okay, so the name fits?

Jennifer Hartline

Yes.

Host

So you are Bootheel? You're not you're not expanding past that. Well, let's talk about you're the director of fund development with a "d" but you could also be the director of fun development because you, had some fun projects during the statewide shutdown. And I want to talk about these Hopeful Rocks. Can you tell us more about that?

Jennifer Hartline

Sure. The Hopeful Rocks project came about as, those of us working on with the Show Me Hope program were sitting around thinking of ideas and ways that we could spread hope throughout our community, during the lockdown time of the Covid pandemic. And, at that time, one of the activities that families could do together was to visit, parks and, and those sorts of things. And so we would go around and we painted rocks, something that had been done a few years ago. We sort of brought it back a little bit, and we would do, prize rocks.

We put a prize rock in every county, and if someone found that particular rock, sort of like hunting for Easter eggs, they had a prize with it. And that prize was a self-care packet for the family or the individual who found it. So it was full of things like coping skills, tips, stress relievers, all sorts of information, including some disaster preparedness information.

Host

How many rocks were painted?

Jennifer Hartline

Oh gosh, hundreds, if not thousands.

Host

Who did all of them?

Jennifer Hartline

Well, our staff did, we would sometimes take them home on the weekends, and we just would paint and paint and paint, and we had some of our staff at Bootheel Counseling our total staff, not just our Show Me Hope team. We have about 100 employees.

And so we were grateful that, everybody kind of joined in and but our Show Me Hope team, I will have to say spend a lot of time painting rocks. Not just at the beginning of the project, but throughout the whole project. We kind of used that as a way just to be out in the community and to meet people and talk to them once we were able to do so.

Host

Yeah, that's great. Where all the rocks found, are there still some out there?

Jennifer Hartline

Oh, I'm sure there's still some out there. Yeah. There's no way we could have known that they were all found. Matter of fact, one of our counties still has a prized rock that has not been claimed, and we have went back twice to find it, and we can't find it ourselves now.

Host

Years from now, someone's going to stumble upon one of these and go. What? What is this?

Jennifer Hartline

Yes, they probably will.

Host

Yeah, that's great. Jennifer Hartline is joining us from Bootheel Counseling Services. And so you wanted people to share some of their stories of hope. Were there any stories from families, that were posted that kind of stick out to you?

Jennifer Hartline

Yeah. There were a couple, one story that comes to mind is that there was a family who, because of the pandemic, and they lived in a larger city, they had come to stay with

grandparents. And so they were able being more of a rural area in the bootheel, they were able to get out and enjoy things and, that become part of their daily adventures. They would go out into the community and, and search for the hopeful rocks. And, they just talked about how much joy it brought that family during a very difficult time.

## Host

One of the recurring themes through Show Me Hope has been looking out for educators, social workers, first responders, and you and your staff at Bootheel Counseling Services did that as well with these BCS talks. These were virtual presentations.

## Jennifer Hartline

Yes. What we would do is every Wednesday, I think it was at 2:00, we would have presentations that went out and they were targeted very specifically to different groups each week as well as anyone could join in. But we did specific BCS talks that were centered around teachers who were working so hard to educate their children while their students were at home.

We focus on the stresses of that and the stresses of going back to school. We did presentations, specifically for first responders and health care workers, and everything from the stress levels and how things change and the medical field completely, during the pandemic time and that addressed the scariness sometimes of those positions. And, you know, those of us in healthcare who were at work and, just we tried to do a lot of education around coping skills and, and just, taking a minute to breathe and to do mindfulness activities and those sorts of things.

## Host

Jennifer Hartline joining us from Bootheel Counseling Services. Have you had an opportunity to talk with, educators and first responders? Are things kind of getting back to a sense of normalcy for them with their everyday jobs?

## Jennifer Hartline

I do believe so. I believe it's, somewhat of a new normal. I think that those women and men who are in those fields just have a heart and a passion for serving in that nature, and they are willing to do whatever it takes.

But whatever it takes sometimes takes a big toll on the individual. So, we have had some, specific trainings. We have done things like use sidewalk chalk and just graffiti up their parking lots where the employees worked at the hospitals just to let them know that we care and that we're thinking about them and that they are not alone.

And everything that they were do not just during the pandemic, but every day. And the same really goes for first responders. We would send out appreciation cards. We would go visit, we have a great relationship with our first responders and law enforcement in our community and just made sure that they knew that we were not only there for the community, but them as individuals as well.

## Host

Show Me Hope is Missouri's crisis counseling program that is used, activated in response to a disaster or a critical event. Jennifer, making our way out of this pandemic. These services are still available for people in your area. What are some basic coping skills that people can use in everyday life that, you know, we don't have a widespread disaster, but a critical event that could affect one person or family?

## Jennifer Hartline

Sure. Yeah. I think the pandemic honestly changed everyone. Forever in some things. And one exercise that's super easy that can be done, with children, adults, it doesn't really matter, but it's just to take a moment when you feel the anxiety or the fear or stress creeping up on you, it's just to take a moment and just breathe for a minute.

Think that you have, an imaginary ball in your hand, maybe. And then it's going in and it's going out and just taking breaths, inhaling and exhaling as that ball will go in or go out. It's just a great exercise that can be done. Another, great coping skill when feeling stress that we talk about, is think five and that what are five things you can see?

What are four things you can hear? What are three things that you can touch. What are two things that you can taste? And what is one thing, we kind of do this one a little differently: What is one thing that can bring you peace and calmness and just try to think of what those things are. And by just taking a moment, stepping away from the situation, a lot of times that can help individuals cope and it can help them think a little differently, and it can just give them that little small break, that sometimes we all need when situations just get hard, they get panicked, they get stressful. And, sometimes we just need a few minutes. Simple things can help us regroup very fastly.

## Host

And whether people are living in the Bootheel or around the state, there's someone that can help in your area?

## Jennifer Hartline

Yes, absolutely. There is information on the Show Me Hope is out on the website's Facebook pages. There are people all over the state that can help with coping skills and, and resource linkage and just all sorts of things that show me hope is a great program.

## Host

Any other, community collaborative efforts that you have going on or anything coming up in the near future?

Jennifer Hartline

Well, we here in the Bootheel have lots of things going on. May's mental health month, and we have, local things that we're doing within our agency. We are all in this together. Mental health is important and it is something to be talked about.

We have to break the stigma associated with mental health so that more people will seek help when they need it.

Host

Jennifer Hartline from Bootheel Counseling Services, thank you so much for your time.

Jennifer Hartline

Thank you.

Host

This is Show Me Today the Voice of Missouri.