

Local

# GRADD hosts Mental Health First Aid training

✍ By Renee Beasley Jones Messenger-Inquirer

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Green River Area Development District earned a grant to offer 50 people Mental Health First Aid training on March 28.

The training is free and open to the public. However, space is limited, and seats are going quickly. By Wednesday morning -- one day after registration opened -- 10 seats were filled.

"It is something (the Green River Mental Health and Aging Coalition) has asked for," said Jeanette Woodward, a GRADD employee who provides staff support to the coalition. "We had to find funding to offer it."

The grant came from the Kentucky Mental Health and Aging Coalition.

Preference will be given to people who have not had Mental Health First Aid training before, Woodward said. Anyone who has received training in the past can recertify online.

And participants must commit to attend the full day, she said. Lunch and study materials are provided.

Registration is required by March 15. For a registration form, email [forms@gradd.com](mailto:forms@gradd.com).

Continuing education units for professionals are available after course completion.

Woodward took the class about eight years ago and found it helpful. "It makes it easier to talk to people and encourage them to get the help they need."

Presenters will be Lionel Phelps and RonSonlyn Clark of RiverValley Behavioral Health.

Phelps, clinical psychologist and vice president of research and development at RVBH, said 1 million people nationwide have received Mental Health First Aid training during the past decade. The program is offered in 25 countries.

Studies show that one in five Americans suffers from mental illness, Phelps said.

"(Mental Health First Aid) helps take the fear and hesitation out of starting conversations about mental health and substance use problems," he said. "It takes the mystery out of what mental illness is and isn't."

The eight-hour class is interactive, using role-playing, visual and auditory exercises.

The seminar covers all the major classifications of mental illness and takes people through the five-step ALGEE action plan.

ALGEE stands for:

- Assess for risk of suicide or harm.
- Listen nonjudgmentally.

- Give reassurance and information.
- Encourage appropriate professional help.
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

RVBH has invested in Mental Health First Aid. During the past year, eight additional staff members have become certified to provide the training.

Across RVBH's region, hundreds of educators, law enforcement officials, homeless shelter personnel and others received Mental Health First Aid training during the past year.

Later this month, Kentucky Wesleyan College administrators are scheduled for training.

"We want Mental Health First Aid to be as common as CPR," Phelps said.

There is also a Youth Mental Health First Aid, which trains people who work with young people.

Any school, company or agency that would like more information about training should contact Wanda Figueroa, RVBH CEO, at 800-737-0696.

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