



Encouraging Educators To 'Take The Time' For Their Own Wellness

Juggling the practical, academic, and emotional challenges brought to their profession by Covid-19 with their personal obligations has taken an unprecedented toll on today's teachers.

"When you are under so much personal and professional stress, you forget who you are," says Ronda Smith Branch, an Anthropedia certified well-being coach who is spending a lot of her time working specifically with educators. Having worked in urban youth ministry and a St. Louis charter school for girls, she finds their stories and struggles all too familiar.

"I know what it's like to be in the classroom or a school building and to have to deal with challenging behaviors," she says. "I have teachers tell me they are worried because their students were already struggling before the pandemic. Educators take that on in a personal way."

Smith Branch's efforts with educators are made possible with support from the St. Louis County Children's Service Fund. The funding provides teachers, counselors and nurses working in St. Louis County public schools free access to Take The Time™, a partnership between Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri (MHA-EM) and Anthropedia that combines wellness resources for groups and individuals.

MHA-EM's Wellness Seminars, designed for groups and offered in-person or virtually, cover topics such as burnout, compassion fatigue, resilience and managing stress and anxiety. Anthropedia's Know Yourself™ Wellness Coaching Program is perfect for individuals who want a more personalized experience. Innovative and evidence-based, the program offers guided support in well-being designed to help people increase self-understanding, manage stress, and find deeper contentment in their lives.

"Now more than ever, people feel alone and disconnected while trying to meet increasing personal and professional obligations," says Sue King, MHA-EM president and CEO. "Many are looking for support to adapt to our changing world, which is why we are delighted to partner with Anthropedia to offer Take The Time™, and especially pleased to be offering these resources to those working so closely with our children."

Smith Branch agrees wholeheartedly.

"Educators can't have healthy classrooms if they are not dealing with their own emotional wellbeing," she says.

"I remind people that they need to slow down and see themselves first. There's a freedom you gain when you know yourself."



To learn more about Take The Time™, visit www.mha-em.org or email wellness@mha-em.org.





CEO MESSAGE

While COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges, I am proud that Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri (MHA-EM) continues to prioritize the mental health of those living and working in our community.

As we find a path past the pandemic, it is critical that we lead with empathy. We know the impacts on mental health have been profound. Traffic to our free, online mental health screening tool proves the need is real. In 2020, there were 6,160 screenings, compared to 1,884 in 2019. That is a 227% increase. Top screenings were for depression and anxiety.

It is possible that many people experienced mental health challenges for the first time during COVID-19. As distressing as this has been, it is my hope that this collective, shared experience will lead to increased awareness of the need for robust mental health resources and elevate the conversation about mental health in general. With education and early intervention, we can prevent mental health challenges from developing into crises. This is at the heart of B4Stage4, a philosophy that MHA-EM embraces with conviction and hope.

We are deepening our commitment to B4Stage4 and encourage you to take this journey, too. The first step is to remember that mental health is as vital as physical health. If you know someone struggling with mental health, point them to our free, online mental health screening tool, which can result in a concrete plan toward treatment. Let's fight in the open!

With gratitude,

Sue King, *President & CEO*



MHA-EM Welcomes New Chief Program Officer



Brittany Graham has joined the MHA-EM team as Chief Program Officer.

Brittany oversees all current and future programs that provide direct services to the individuals we serve.

Brittany has worked in social work and the nonprofit field for almost 13 years, with a primary focus on at-risk youth.

Before joining MHA-EM in July, she was Support Services Manager at Covenant House Missouri, where she oversaw grant budgets for employment, outreach, and the clinical therapy department, and helped transition the organization to trauma informed care. Welcome, Brittany!



Check it out!

Online Mental Health Screening Tool

Early intervention can help us detect mental health problems early! Our online screening tool is a free and confidential way to determine if you are experiencing symptoms that indicate early signs of mental health conditions.

A screening only takes a few minutes, and after you finish you will be given information about the next steps you should take based on the results. While a screening is not a diagnosis, it can be a helpful tool for starting a conversation with your doctor or a loved one about your mental health.

You can find our screening tool and learn more about our B4Stage4 philosophy at mha-em.org/dont-wait-b4stage4/get-screened.

Welcome to the MHA-EM Board

We are excited to welcome four new members to our Board of Directors:



Lori Dowd
Founder and Executive Producer, StoryTrack



Jason Henderson
Principal, Edward Jones



Michael McCartney
Owner, McCartney Wealth Management



Joe Yancey
Former CEO, Places for People

READY, SET, INSPIRE

A Conversation With Collegiate Council Leader



In 2020, we proudly launched the **Collegiate Mental Health Innovation Council of Greater St. Louis**, an opportunity for students attending area colleges and universities to learn about and engage in mental health advocacy to strengthen resources and supports on their respective campuses. We sat down with **Dan O'Connell**, vice president of the Council, for his thoughts on being a member and mental health advocate.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE COUNCIL AND BECOME INVOLVED?

Last year, I was the co-chair of the Student Government Association Mental Health Task Force at St. Louis University (SLU). We were charged with writing a report summarizing areas of mental health on campus that benefited students, as well as identifying gaps. One of my colleagues on the original task force suggested I apply for the Council, so I did!

WHAT PART OF THE COLLEGIATE COUNCIL'S WORK RESONATES WITH YOU THE MOST?

The Council exists to enable collaboration between St. Louis area colleges. We are much better equipped for policy advocacy when we come together from different walks of life. I have been very involved with mental health advocacy at SLU through student government. I joined the Council to discover what is happening at nearby campuses, and to share the changes I was making with my SLU partners. I am so glad I did, because I have learned so much about the status of mental health at the other universities represented on the Council.

WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE AS VICE PRESIDENT ENTAIL?

Being a leader on the Council has been really interesting. As vice president, I help organize meetings, direct Council actions, and make connections between college students and university administrations in St. Louis.

HOW HAS THE COUNCIL PREPARED YOU FOR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE?

Our work has exposed me to a new kind of policy advocacy. It is one thing to contact your own school administration. It is another to coordinate contacts between several institutions across a metropolitan area. While these initiatives are on a local level, they will have reverberating impacts as students come from across the nation and world to St. Louis schools. I know this experience has prepared me for my future goals in policy advocacy on a national level. Our work is just beginning, and I look forward to what we accomplish together!



Learn more about the Council at www.mha-em.org/get-involved/collegiate-mental-health-council.

Help From Our Friends—Volunteer Spotlight



When Wilma Harfmann's good friend invited her to help as a volunteer for MHA-EM's Representative Payee Program, she gladly accepted.

The invitation came from Cathy Carroll, administrative assistant for the program, who recognized the team's need for clerical help to keep things running smoothly for the 180+ clients served each month.

"Cathy knows I have a passion for volunteering," says Wilma. "I have worked at several different organizations around St. Louis throughout the years, so I said 'yes!'"

Wilma volunteers twice a week for about four hours each day, assisting with mailings, filing, and maintaining records.

"I enjoy working with the Rep Payee team," says Wilma. "Listening to them on the phone with the individuals they serve shows me how much compassion they have for people who are sometimes in very hard situations. The help they provide is desperately needed."

The Rep Payee program manages Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Disability Income (SSDI) benefits for individuals who have been instructed by the Social Security Administration to obtain an institutional payee or who have difficulty managing these funds on their own. To learn more, visit www.mha-em.org/how-we-help/representative-payee-program.



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We are your resource
for mental health information,
education and advocacy.



LET'S CELEBRATE!

Plan to join us FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2021, for our traditional Snow Ball Gala!

Held at the Four Seasons Hotel St. Louis, the festive evening will feature a live auction, raffles, an inspiring program, presentation of our prestigious Silver Bell and Silver Key Awards, a delicious dinner, followed by cocktails and dancing to the Fabulous Motown Revue.

Safety is our top priority. Proof of vaccination or negative Covid-19 test within 48 hours of event is required. Masks required.

Limited seating this year!

To get your tickets online, use this QR code:

