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“OKAY TO SAY” LAUNCHES IN AMARILLO AS NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH BEGINS

Campaign opens discussion about mental health and launches a statewide movement to increase awareness and access to effective care

AMARILLO (May 4, 2016) — “Okay to Say,” a statewide initiative aimed at ending the stigma surrounding mental health issues and to provide resources to those in need, officially launched in Amarillo today at a luncheon designed to rally support from local stakeholders, political figures and the business community.

May is national Mental Health Awareness Month. A recent study commissioned by the the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute revealed three-in-four Texans either suffer from mental health issues or are affected by someone who does.

“Everyone knows someone who is dealing with this issue,” said Laura Street board member of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute and co-chair of the Panhandle Behavioral Health Initiative. “It’s important that we let people know that it’s Okay to Say – that they feel they can talk openly about their condition, just like they talk openly about any other medical condition. Help is available for these who need it – and so is acceptance, compassion and understanding.”

The luncheon included remarks by Street, Rep. Four Price of the Texas House of Representatives, 87th District, and Andy Keller, PhD, President and CEO of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. The program was held at the Amarillo Area Foundation and encouraged Amarillo and panhandle residents to join the campaign by visiting okaytosay.org. This movement provides community members a platform to add their voice and share their stories of how mental health issues have affected their lives and the lives of friends, family and colleagues.

“Okay to Say” launched statewide on February 29th with a multimedia campaign that included well known Texans such as President George W. Bush, Emmitt Smith and Mark Cuban. The campaign aims to increase public awareness about mental health issues that affect Texans and the effective treatments available, as well as the challenges and successes people encounter when they seek help for this treatable disease. Okay to Say asks individuals and organizations to show their support by signing their names and sharing their stories and support at okaytosay.org. By talking openly about mental health, Okay to Say hopes to raise awareness that treatment works and is available across Texas.

“The first step to getting help is realizing that it’s okay to say you have a mental illness or know someone who does,” said Keller. “By talking more openly about mental health, we can lead the way, as individuals and as a state, in getting people the help they need to get better and live their lives, not their illness.”



About the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute is a nonpartisan organization that supports the implementation of policies and programs to help Texans obtain effective, efficient mental health care when and where they need. For more information about the Institute, please visit texasstateofmind.org. To join the Okay to Say movement, visit okaytosay.org.

About the Panhandle Behavioral Health Initiative

The Panhandle Behavioral Health Initiative (PBHI) is a consortium of community leaders and mental health care providers who have a shared interest to improve collaboration of mental health care services in the Panhandle area. Their mission is to assess - inform – transform and to begin the conversation of how to meet the mental health care needs of all Panhandle residents.

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