



Choices available to cope with mental illness, addictions

October 5, 2009

Evansville Courier and Press

Try to imagine what your life would be like if you were not able to create your own opportunities. In today's society, we are fortunate. We have an abundance of opportunities to seek out better education, employment, housing, and improvements to our mental and physical health.

Only 46 years ago, individuals suffering from mental illness or addictions did not have the same opportunities afforded to them. These individuals were primarily treated in state-operated facilities.

In 1963, the Community Mental Health Act revolutionized the way mental health and addiction treatment was delivered. Individuals were provided the opportunity to seek mental health treatment in their own community, which led to:

- Outpatient treatment options, which allow individuals to receive treatment with little to no disruption to their everyday lives.
- A shift in focus to recovery by reconnecting to the individual's community through employment, support groups and securing adequate housing.
- The possibility of re-establishing relationships with the individual's family and friends.

Where does this lead us to today? To opportunities and choices.

In 2009, a study of the community mental health needs of citizens of Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh and Warrick counties revealed that 290,531 individuals reside in this area

(data obtained from the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program).

If we use the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' best estimates of a one-year prevalence rate of mental disorder in the United States, the following statistics reflect how many people in our four-county area could experience anxiety, depression or another mental disorder:

- 54,910 (18.9 percent) youth ages 9-17.
- 61,011 (21 percent) adults ages 18-54.
- 57,525 (19.8 percent) of adults ages 55 and older.

And over the course of a lifetime, 46.4 percent of all individuals will experience some form of these same disorders, according to the National Comorbidity Survey Replication.

What does this mean?

Mental illness and addiction affect everyone at some point in his life.

Whether it is you personally or a close friend, relative or co-worker, you probably know someone who has been affected in his lifetime.

The most important thing to remember is that help is available. This weekly column is designed to educate and help our community better understand mental health and addictive disorders facing us today.

We want to hear from you. Send any questions or comments you have to comments@southwestern.org.

Your questions may be featured in a future article.

Please remember, you have choices when seeking help for mental health and addiction treatment — and the opportunities are endless.

This column was written by Rebecca R. Glines, Director, Communications for Southwestern Healthcare, Inc. Contact the organization at (812) 436-4221 or comments@southwestern.org.