

## NEWS BY YOU

## Programs for mental-health caregivers

*Submitted by Toni Donnelly, director of training and innovation for the Family Involvement Center, a non-profit that supports families who care for young people with emotional, behavioral or mental-health disorders.*

Statistics reveal about 60 million Americans will experience a mental illness this year. Yet, less than half will seek treatment, probably because of the stigma associated with mental illness or because they have no idea where to turn for help.

Hoping to break this burden, the Family Involvement Center, in partnership with Magellan Health Services of Arizona, the Arizona Department of Health Services Division of Behavioral Health Services, and the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, introduced Mental Health First Aid to Arizona in 2010.

Since then, more than 700 individuals in Maricopa County have been trained in how to recognize mental-health disorders, and how to approach a mental-

health crisis.

The goal of Mental Health First Aid isn't to turn everyone into mental-health experts, but to give them basic skills and knowledge to be a first responder who can assess, but not diagnose, a situation until the person in need can be safely handed off to professionals.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, or ASIST, is also being offered in Maricopa County. ASIST teaches caregivers of those facing mental-health challenges to feel more comfortable, confident and competent in helping to prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

With support from Magellan, the Family Involvement Center also hosts a book club to facilitate open discussions about mental-health stigma and use reading to support learning. Participants are able to gain a deeper understanding about the challenges and realities of living successfully with a mental illness.

*For more information, e-mail Toni Donnelly at [toni@familyinvolvement-center.org](mailto:toni@familyinvolvement-center.org).*



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