

# Mental Health 1st Aid trains people to respond to crises

## GUEST COMMENTARY

by Shawn Thiele  
Magellan of Arizona deputy CEO

If you are like me, your heart breaks every time you see another tragedy in the news. You want to help but are asking yourself, "What can I do?" There may not be anything we as the general public can do in these high-profile tragic situations, but every day we can intervene if we encounter someone in a mental health crisis and we can be empowered to offer assistance to someone demonstrating the signs and symptoms of mental illness.

Like CPR training for physical health emergencies, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) empowers people to help others when they are experiencing mental health issues. Just like CPR, MHFA can save lives. And, like CPR, anyone can learn Mental Health First Aid.

It's important to note that one out of every four adults in the United States will be affected by a mental illness at some point in their lives. The general public doesn't know enough about behavioral/mental health issues and this causes many to fear or stigmatize the people challenged by those issues.

In 2011, in response to the Tucson tragedy, Magellan Health Services of Arizona partnered with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and the other Regional Behavioral Health

Authorities (RBHA) statewide to train community members about mental health. Since the program launched, more than 700 community members in Maricopa County have been trained.

Magellan offers the 12-hour MHFA training free of charge. Our goal is to train as many Arizonans as possible to assess a situation; select and implement appropriate interventions; and help a person in crisis or who may be developing the signs and symptoms of mental illness.

MHFA is the initial help given to a person showing symptoms of mental illness or in a mental health crisis until appropriate professional, peer or family support can be engaged. The goal of the training is to help community members be better prepared to help individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, having a panic attack or contemplating suicide, or experiencing acute mental distress.

Mental Health First Aid training teaches people a five-step action plan to help someone in a mental health crisis or someone showing symptoms of mental illness. To help remember the steps, course participants learn the acronym, A-L-G-E-E:

- A: Assess for risk of suicide or harm.
- L: Listen non-judgmentally.
- G: Give reassurance and information.
- E: Encourage appropriate professional help.
- E: Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

Magellan is offering its next MHFA training from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 25 and 26 at our Learning and Performance Center at 4801 E. Washington St., Phoenix. Again, this is available to anyone interested, free of charge, but you must sign up for the course. Visit [www.MagellanofAZ.com](http://www.MagellanofAZ.com) to sign up. To learn more about the Mental Health First Aid program, visit [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org).



Shawn Thiele

# Letters

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## People kill people

**Editor:**  
Someone asked me a question. The person wanted to know if I thought there would have been any wars, if guns had never been invented. Well we all know that guns don't kill people. People kill people. An old cliché to be sure, but also the truth.

In answer to the questions, I said, well did the Crusaders have the benefits of guns? Did Attila the Hun use guns in his conquests? Did Alexander the great have guns when he conquered the known world? What about the ancient Romans? Did they use guns? Millions have been killed in the history of mankind, without the use of

firearms. Looks to me like people kill people.

If we want to stop mass killings in this country, we should go after the root cause. We should tell Hollywood to stop making so many violent movies. Video manufacturers should tone it down and those who are mentally ill need to get help. The list goes on.

As far as guns are concerned in our society, What is it that some people don't understand about the second amendment? It is the amendment which guarantees all the other amendments. The right of the people shall not be infringed, not by anyone, because the Constitution of the United States is far more important than what any politician thinks. Had the Founders displayed the same vision and courage that present day politicians show, well the United States would still be a British colony, and the Founders wouldn't have founded anything. Think I am wrong? Think again.

Roy Azzarello  
Goodyear

## Letters welcome

Address letters to: *West Valley View, Inc.*  
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