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The 2014 graduating class of Bergen LEADS, Bergen County's premier leadership program for adults, will host a forum, *A Real Discussion of Mental Health*, along with a Resource Fair featuring Bergen County mental health service providers on June 10th.

NEWS

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Changing Perceptions of Mental Illness

Join Us for A Real Discussion of Mental Health

North Jersey – Mental Illness is a term often describing “*those people*” or “*that population*” with “*those problems.*” But, who exactly are *those people*? Typically, the public mind perpetuates an image of a distressed person with their head in their hands or a homeless person mumbling to himself, but the actual picture is much more familiar. It's the people we see every day: our neighbors, our co-workers, our spouses, and even ourselves. We can no longer pretend that a good job, nice clothes and a smiling face are indicators of wellness, because these issues can affect persons of any age, race, religion or income.

We live in a world where one in five people will experience mental illness during their lifetime. So, why isn't anyone talking about it? As a nation, we continue to struggle to have an open, honest conversation about mental health, allowing misconceptions, fear, social consequences, and discrimination to keep us silent.

It's time to start talking.

Join the Bergen LEADS Class of 2014 in starting "A Real Discussion of Mental Health" addressing stigma, social misconceptions, public policy, advocacy, and the delivery of mental health services. Robert N. Davison, executive director of the Mental Health Association of Essex County, will deliver a keynote address and moderate the ensuing discussion. The Forum will be followed by a mental health resource fair.

The Bergen LEADS Public Forum, sponsored by TD Bank, United Water, Advance Housing, Inc., Bergen Regional Medical Center, CarePlus NJ, Comprehensive Behavioral Healthcare, Vantage Health System and West Bergen Mental Healthcare, will be held on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm at Bergen Community College's Ciccone Theater, 400 Paramus Road in Paramus. Immediately following will be a Mental Health Resource Fair from 4:30pm to 5:45pm featuring Bergen County providers of mental health services. The event is free and open to the public, but pre-registration is required; visit www.bergenleads.org/public-forum or call 201-489-9454 Ext. 112.

"There is a need to create a dialogue on the County level that brings attention to mental health," says William "Pat" Schuber, former Bergen County Executive and Bergen LEADS seminar director. "The Bergen LEADS Class of 2014 is confronting that challenge head on, and invites the public to be a part of the conversation."

The 26 men and women in the Bergen LEADS Class of 2014 have met monthly since September to dissect issues, debate viewpoints and get a first-hand look at Bergen County's infrastructure. The Forum is the culmination of the seminar year for the Class of 2014. Members of the graduating class are: Carmen Addeo (Rutherford); Jonathan Backhaus (Oakland); JoAnn Berenguer (Clifton); Joseph Carnevale (Oradell); Marlene Ceragno (Fort Lee); Shoum Chakravarti (Secaucus); Timothy Chou (Paramus); Nilufer DeScherer (Woodcliff Lake); Lisa DiGaetano (Park Ridge); Alexis Fatigati (New Milford); Margaret Keane (Dumont); Samuel Lee (Englewood); Mary Lyons-Kim

(Wyckoff); Sheila Moore (Cliffside Park); Michael Morea (Glen Rock); Cynthia Mullins-Simmons (Teaneck); Joanne Murad (Waldwick); Sandra Pinkerton (Fort Lee); Maria Rini (Oradell); Maria J Rodriguez (Lyndhurst); Linsey Schwetje (Weehawken); Eddie Seavers (Midland Park); Bruce Silberman (Fair Lawn); Lauren Turiello (Lyndhurst); Phil Wells (Hillsdale); Erica West (Fair Lawn).

The Volunteer Center of Bergen County strengthens the community by connecting people through service and developing civic leaders.

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