



COUNTY OF ANOKA

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

GOVERNMENT CENTER
2100 3RD AVENUE STE 700 • ANOKA, MINNESOTA 55303-5024
(763) 323-5700

November 23, 2009

MARTHA WEAVER

Public Information Manager

Direct #763-323-5744

E-mail: martha.weaver@co.anoka.mn.us

Contact: Jerry Soma, Anoka County Human Services Division Manager, 763-422-7008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ANOKA COUNTY RESIDENTS SURVEYED ABOUT VIEWS ON MENTAL HEALTH

What are your thoughts on mental health? The Mental Wellness Campaign for Anoka County, a group of consumers, family members, community leaders, and human services professionals, wants to know what Anoka County residents think about the topic.

With funding from Mercy & Unity Hospitals' Foundation, The Rose Foundation, Anoka County, and Connexus Energy, the Campaign has hired Wilder Research to collect information now through the beginning of 2010.

Your responses will provide a snapshot of current perceptions of mental illness in Anoka County. This information will help guide the Campaign's educational efforts as they promote their message, "mental health is as important as physical health." The first survey was done in 2005. From time to time, the survey will be redone to see if community responses are changing.

Wilder is coordinating personal interviews at public places. Also, people can call 651-280-2800 to complete the Anoka County mental wellness survey. Another way to complete the survey is on line at www.wildersurveys.org/anoka. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete the survey. Survey respondents will remain anonymous.

\$1,000 in Prizes to Be Given Away

Survey participants are eligible to enter a drawing for one of several prizes, including \$50 or \$25 cash awards and passes to Anoka County Parks' attractions, such as Bunker Beach and Chomonix Golf Course. Contact information used in the drawing will be separated from survey answers. A drawing will be held for people who complete the survey by Dec. 22.

Connexus Energy, located in Ramsey, is proud to be a part of the project, according to Tammy Ferguson, manager in human resources and chair of the Mental Wellness Campaign for Anoka County. "We care about our customers and eagerly help with projects that have a long-term, positive affect on the communities we serve," Ferguson said. "I encourage people to take part in the survey. By doing so, you can help increase awareness of mental health issues."

National Issue, Local Response

Anoka County has a strategic plan to implement a recovery model for mental health services. Its focus is on mental wellness, not illness, according to Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah, chair of the county's Human Services Committee.

"We're working to elevate mental wellness in people's minds so they take care of their mental health the same way they take care of their physical health," Commissioner Sivarajah said.

Between 70-90 percent of people with mental illnesses can experience reduced or eliminated symptoms with medications and/or therapy. Untreated mental illnesses cost our American society more than \$1.6 billion each year in lost productivity.

A recently released community assessment, required by state statute and conducted by the Anoka County Community Health and Environmental Services Department, identified mental health issues in the top five public health concerns.

An estimated one out of five people, or about 64,000 residents in Anoka County, has a mental illness. For children and youth, it is estimated that 12 percent suffer from one or more mental disorders.

Anoka County has resources to help. For more information on mental health services for adults, call 763-712-2911. For more information on mental health services for children, call 763-712-2703. Crisis services are available by calling 763-755-3801.

For more information on the Mental Wellness Campaign for Anoka County, call Tammy Ferguson, 612-280-0386.