BRIDGING BRAIN HEALTH GAPS

With the Community Foundation’s leadership, Dubuque is making strides to increase access to services and remove the stigma around mental illness.

Pictured: Jon Decker is the director of Crescent Community Health Center’s Brain Health Clinic, which opened in 2019 and continues to grow.
Julie Homb, a licensed therapist in Dubuque, has seen an increase in the number of people seeking counseling since the beginning of 2020 — and in the long run, that could be a positive sign.

“I can see a little spark, a little bit of light where it’s normalized to have a conversation about our brain health,” she says. “The pandemic has actually shown us that it’s OK to reach out.”

A Community Conversation

Homb was one of four panelists who took part in a Community Foundation discussion this summer called “Bridging Brain Health Gaps,” which focused on how organizations across the Dubuque region are removing barriers to services and reducing the stigma around mental illness.

The discussion, which drew more than 60 attendees, was part of the Foundation’s new Community Conversations series. During these monthly virtual discussions, community members learn how the Foundation and its partners are addressing critical challenges and strengthening the region.

Addressing Needs

“In our 2016 community needs assessment, brain health overwhelmingly rose to the top of the issues that the Foundation and community needed to put time and resources into,” says Peter Supple, who facilitates the Foundation’s brain health access initiative.

Panelists agreed that there are signs that the stigma around mental illness is easing, thanks in large part to the Brain Health Now campaign. Led by Debi Butler, it has used public messaging to emphasize that just like other organs in our body, the brain also needs care.

“We are reaching 99 counties in Iowa, and we are working at the state level to change language around ‘mental health’ to ‘brain health,’” says Butler, who was on the panel.

Finding Solutions

One of the biggest developments in recent years has been the Community Foundation’s work bringing new voices to the table to take a holistic approach to brain health, says panelist Sue Whitty, president of Mental Health America of Dubuque County. By including leaders from areas like education, law enforcement and faith communities, the Foundation opens new pathways for people to receive the support they need.

Sometimes this these pathways are new services offered by health care providers. One example is Crescent Community Health Center’s Brain Health Clinic, which offers integrated care in a setting where everyone is welcome regardless of their insurability.

Other times, they are non-traditional solutions, such as the Hillcrest Family Service Mobile Crisis Unit, which police officers can call when they encounter a person experiencing a brain health emergency.

Still, the Dubuque region needs more acute care services for brain health, says Jon Decker, director of Crescent’s Brain Health Clinic. Rural areas in particular can be service deserts, and the region as a whole needs more racially and ethnically diverse providers who can connect with diverse patient populations.

“Dubuque is doing a good job increasing access to services,” Decker says. “But, the need continues to grow.”

Support our brain health access initiative.

Contact Peter Supple at peter@dbqfoundation.org or 563-588-2700 for more information.

Join us for future community conversations!
dbqfoundation.org/events
Free support groups help teens tend to brain health

When the Community Foundation hosted listening sessions last year to identify the brain health needs of local youth, those caring for teens expressed concern. “Many adolescents are experiencing anxiety and depression caused by the pandemic,” says licensed mental health counselor Julie Homb, who leads the Foundation’s children’s brain health work. In answer to requests from parents and brain health practitioners, the Foundation partnered with Hillcrest Family Services to provide free virtual group counseling sessions over the summer for teens. The group served as a safe place for teens to talk about how they’re coping, learn from trained counselors to manage tough feelings, and get back to feeling good again. It also helped teens feel a sense of community. “It has been an adjustment for young people to make sense of what is going on while focusing on next steps like high school and college,” says counselor Kristin Nolen. “We want teens to know they aren’t alone.”

‘THE MORE WE GIVE, THE MORE WE GET’

Jim Gantz is a Community Foundation board member and a former owner of a now fourth-generation family business. Jean Gantz is a retired special education teacher. Their legacy gift to Greater Dubuque Forever Fund will make an impact on their community for generations to come.

Family and community are the most important things to Dubuque residents Jim and Jean Gantz, and they have made plans to take care of both long into the future.

In planning their estates, they arranged for their assets to be passed down to their children as well as to their community through the Foundation. Along with other gifts, Jim and Jean committed a $1 million legacy gift to the Greater Dubuque Forever Fund, which will transfer from their life insurance policies to the Foundation after they pass.

Why did they decide to create this legacy? We sat down with them so they could share their charitable giving story with us.

How did you get started with charitable giving?

The community has been really good to us, and it’s about supporting the community that supports us. We found in so many instances that the more we give, the more we get. We began our relationship with the Community Foundation by starting several endowments for Holy Spirit Parish around the time the Foundation formed. We also have been giving to other endowment funds the Foundation hosts, like the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium.

How did you go from those early gifts to the types of complex gifts you have arranged today?

It came about through planning for our children’s future. Part of that plan required us to purchase life insurance, and we learned that we could get a lot of insurance for reasonable premiums. We learned that that we could use required minimum distributions from individual retirement accounts to pay the insurance premiums. Now, the policies are owned by the Foundation, and they will support community needs for generations to come.

By asking questions and sharing our goals about giving, the Community Foundation guided us so we could come up with a plan that gave us options. After working with the Foundation and taking part in its complimentary estate planning service with Thompson & Associates, we also set up a $1 million Charitable Remainder Unitrust, which will transfer to the Foundation.

Join us in raising $5 million for the Greater Dubuque Forever Fund by 2023. Make your gift today at dbqfoundation.org/forever.

Or, contact Bobbi Earles, vice president of philanthropy and communications, at 563-588-2700 or bobbi@dbqfoundation.org.
GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GIVING

Want to learn more proposed about tax law changes? Review your charitable giving plan? Take advantage of tax credits? We are here for you!

In the past 18 months, changes in our world have impacted the finances and charitable giving plans of many people in our community. We at the Community Foundation want you to know that we are here to support you in meeting your charitable goals and making the best decisions for you and your family.

**Estate planning**

For individuals who have created estate plans, the proposed Biden/Harris tax law changes could have implications for your future giving.

In addition, we understand that you — like many others — might have experienced non-tax-related changes to your financial and family situations.

These are all great reasons to review — or start thinking about — your estate plan. We offer complimentary, confidential estate planning services to our partners to help you accomplish your goals for yourself, your family and your community. Contact us to learn more.

**Endow Iowa**

Don’t forget that when you give to an endowment fund at the Community Foundation, your gift is eligible for the generous Endow Iowa 25% State Tax Credit.

Good news: Your gift today will make you among the first in line for the next round of credits.

The Community Foundation hosts over 265 nonprofit endowment funds across the seven-county Dubuque region and can accept cash or complex gifts like stock, bonds or IRA rollovers. Make your gift today to take advantage.

**Talk with us!**

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