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BEHAVIORALHEALTH

# Noble News & Views

A bi-monthly report for those in support of  
University Health Behavioral Health and our mission.

Jan/Feb 2022

## Awareness Dates

### February

Black History Month

Random Acts of Kindness Week:

February 13-19

National Eating Disorder Awareness

Week: February 21-27

### March

Self-Harm Awareness Month

Social Worker Recognition Month

Self-Injury Awareness Day: March 1

Pi Day: March 14

National Social Worker Day: March 15

World Bipolar Day: March 30

National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week:

March 21-27

## Events

Building Resilient, Trauma Informed  
Cultures

Wednesday-Thursday, March 9-10, 2022;

8:45 am - 4:00 pm

\$550; scholarships available

Register here: <https://bit.ly/34HdAmS>

For more information  
about upcoming events, visit  
[facebook.com/universityhealthBH](https://facebook.com/universityhealthBH)

## Personal Reflections During Black History Month

by Athena Horton, (they/them), UH Behavioral Health Special Projects Coordinator



Every February we are bombarded with images and messaging about the most recognizable Black/African American heroes. Businesses meticulously fashion graphics and imagery plastered with an inspiring quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Maya Angelou, Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass, or the Obamas; they carefully craft statements about diversity, highlighting achievements and reminding us to reflect on the contributions of Black Americans; they hold lecture series and webinars, and even speak of diversity and inclusion. As the month comes to a close, the urgency of this information often fades, wilting with it the steam that propels the engine of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) efforts and long-term sustainable change...until an event occurs that cannot be ignored, and another statement of solidarity is released.



I ask myself as a black person and as someone who is dedicated to upholding the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Code of Ethics: Why does Black History Month have that familiar ring of commercialism as other holidays topped with a sprinkle of placation? And am I okay with it? My honest response is no. Black history cannot be boiled down to a few quotes, the abolition of slavery, and images of the civil rights movement.

Black history is everyone's history. It is American history. It is world history. It is living and breathing as you read these words.

Just as it lives on, my hope is that so too does the work toward equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging. Moving beyond words and shifting toward action. Not settling for simply checking a box, but gaining and maintaining the momentum needed to genuinely embody stated values. For me, this is not simply a desire - it is a commitment I've made to myself, to my loved ones and to you. May these words ring true for you, too.

A note to those also invested in this journey: It is common to feel quickly overwhelmed when thinking about how to really "move the needle" or make progress in DE&I work. While I don't delude myself into believing I have all the answers, I'd like to offer a few ideas that I hope can be

helpful to you in your own personal and professional journey.

**1. Engage in critical self-reflection:** Do these thoughts or other talk of DE&I elicit an emotional or physical response in you? Without placing judgement, ask yourself: "What are the core values that I hold contributed to this reaction? What beliefs? What are my

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## Fast Facts about MENTAL HEALTH

- In the United States, more than 16% of people who identify as Black or African American reported having a mental illness in the past year. That's more than seven million people, more than the combined populations of Chicago, Houston and Philadelphia.
- While Black and African American teenagers are more likely than their white counterparts to attempt suicide, Black and African American people of all ages are less likely than white people to die by suicide.
- Between 2008 and 2018, serious mental illness (SMI) increased among Black and African American people of all ages.
- Black and African American people are more often diagnosed with schizophrenia and less often diagnosed with mood disorders compared to white people with the same symptoms. However, providers recommend therapy and medication to Black and African American people less than they do to the general population.

Source: Mental Health America  
<https://www.mhanational.org/issues/black-and-african-american-communities-and-mental-health>

## A note from our COO...

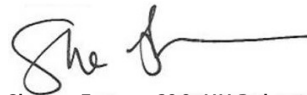
It's a new year with so much that is still uncertain. I keep hearing people talk about getting back to normal – even a new normal – and I'm not convinced we'll know exactly when we've arrived. It may take a while for the dust stirred up by the pandemic to settle in a discernible way.

Until then, my word of intention for this year is grace, which Merriam-Webster defines as a "disposition to... kindness, courtesy or clemency." With so much still up in the air, leaning toward grace will get us through this period of time – grace for when there is a lack of clarity in a situation, grace for when we don't get it exactly right, grace for when a word is left unspoken.

Giving grace isn't an excuse for poor behavior. Rather, it is a commitment to our Noble Cause and the principles of acceptance, bearing hope and compassion. More than ever, we need our Noble Cause, and this year, let's re-center ourselves on it.

Will you join me in this commitment? If so, I'd love to hear how you've either shown grace or how you've seen someone else living our Noble Cause. You can tell your story here: <https://bit.ly/NoticingOurNobleCause>.

May this new year be gentle on you!



Sharon Freese, COO, UH Behavioral Health



## Leading the Way in Relieving Stress

These are stressful and uncertain times, and we have the opportunity to lead the way in being a gentle, trauma-informed presence in our community. Recently, the Center for Trauma Informed Innovation compiled a helpful conversation guide for leaders to ensure they are supporting their staff in the best way possible. Here are some tips for you and your team:

### CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR LEADERS

Pep talks can have an unintended negative effect. Seek to stay connected, refrain from judgment, validate emotions, and ask "what do you need right now?"

### STRESS AND YOUR STAFF

The effects of stress are not always consistent or predictable. Past experiences, available coping mechanisms, and current levels of stress all impact our reactions. Possible changes to on-the-job behavior might include:

- difficulty focusing and remembering details
- mood instability
- time management/productivity issues
- strained relationships and interactions
- health changes, including headaches, stomach problems or pain

Remember that when the brain is in the stress response, executive function tasks are difficult, if not impossible.

### CONNECTION SOOTHES THE STRESS RESPONSE

Regularly check in with your staff and allow time to talk. Ask your staff:

- How would you rate your stress level on a scale of 1-10?
- What are you feeling (physically and mentally)?
- What are your main concerns in the current situation?
- What is one thing that you would change if you could?
- What can we do, that's in our control, to address these concerns?

### CONNECT STAFF TO RESOURCES

Virtual Room of Refuge: [bit.ly/communityroomofrefuge](https://bit.ly/communityroomofrefuge)  
University Health EAP: 1-800-466-8282 or [AlternativesEAP.com](https://AlternativesEAP.com)  
Crisis Numbers: 1-888-279-8188 or text HOME to 741741

## In the News

Recently, **Abbey Gripka, Ph.D.**, Clinical Psychologist, shared evidence-based behavioral health tips to ensure mental wellness during the holiday season and into 2022. Thank you, JuYeon Kim, Chris Morrison, and KSHB 41 for amplifying this important message.

Find her tips here:  
<https://bit.ly/3frUJ0Q>



## Lara Asbaugh Provides Support to Area Resident in Tense Situation

Knowing how to respond in a calm, loving way can be difficult in a difficult situation. Last year, an area resident was struggling with how to respond to someone who kept lingering outside her home, and **Lara Ashbaugh, MS, LPC, NCC**, Senior Projects Coordinator, provided support and ideas on how to help to Fox 4's Sherae Honeycutt.

View the interview here: <https://bit.ly/3fqm6Jb>

## Employee News

### Gino Taylor Completes Doctoral Program

This past October, **Gino Taylor, Ed.D.**, Director, Behavioral Health Quality Improvement, graduated with his Doctorate of Education. Showing his ongoing commitment to people experiencing behavioral health issues, he wrote his dissertation about high school students living with Autism Spectrum Disorder transitioning to college. He completed the program in six years.



You can read "Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The Transition from High School to College and Factors that Influence Freshman Year Adjustment" here:  
<https://bit.ly/34LNxuR>

Congratulations, Dr. Taylor!

### Robbie Phillips Chosen to Participate in the UH Executive Fellowship

Every two years, four leaders are chosen to participate in the UH Executive Fellowship Program. After an extensive application process, our very own **Robbie Phillips, MA, LPC**, Senior Director, Community Services, was chosen to participate in the program's third cohort! This exclusive opportunity provides cohort members the possibility to be mentored by UH executive team members and to expand leadership skills and perspectives.



## Now Available: Third Season of Essential Conversations, a podcast from the Mid-America ATTC

Produced by the Mid-America Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) and funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Essential Conversations podcast dives deep into topics related to behavioral health, such as stigma, trauma informed care (TIC), equity, diversity and leadership.

This season focuses on "Trauma Informed Caring," with the most recent episode featuring **Douglas Burgess, MD** and **Kreasha Williams, MA**, Special Projects Coordinator, providing tips and insights on how to implement trauma informed caring.

To glean insights from Kreasha and to listen to the entire series, listen to the podcast here: <https://spoti.fi/3I4Rbyd>

The Mid-America ATTC is a joint effort through a partnership between UH Behavioral Health and the University of Missouri - Kansas City School of Nursing and Health Studies (UMKC SoNHS). It provides substance use treatment training and expertise to SAMHSA's Region 7, which encompasses providers in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri.



## CTII Cup of Compassion

Need a self-care break in your day? The Behavioral Health Center for Trauma Informed Innovation team provides tips for reinforcing your resilience and supporting self-care with a practice to try in just 20 minutes. While you're there, subscribe to CTII's YouTube Channel at <https://bit.ly/ctiiyoutube>.





Visit [facebook.com/UniversityHealthBH](https://www.facebook.com/UniversityHealthBH) to read more about those who exemplify our Noble Cause of acceptance, bearing hope and compassion to those they serve.

Kudos to the **Registration Team** for patience and extra work in implementing new processes.

-Jennifer Waterman

Kudos to **Connie Bates** who receives an abundance of calls from all departments of the UH hospital system and does so with such grace; going above and beyond what it takes to make necessary connections for our clients. -Mandy Rosenbaum

Kudos to the **UH time keeping department – especially Barbara Vaughan** – who are so appreciated for the work they’ve done during the Kronos outage. -Kellie Sullivan

Kudos to the **Futures Leadership Team** for holding it down as always, in spite of being exhausted, and always being willing to jump in and take care of staff and one another. -Tiffany Sturdivant

Kudos to the **Infection Prevention Team** for taking all of our questions about the increased number of COVID-positive patients in the group homes. -Kellie Sullivan

Kudos to our **community-based workers** providing direct service to our clients with such commitment, in spite of all of the constant changes. -Sharon Freese

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life experiences that informed those beliefs and values, and “Am I open to making room for other perspectives?”

**2. Get curious:** Listen to understand, don’t listen to respond. If you don’t agree with someone, ask questions to learn more about their perspective. It costs nothing to empathize, but choosing not to can destroy safety and fracture relationships.

**3. Keep yourself and others accountable:** Are there ways you have become complicit with the way things are? Are there ways you contribute to inequity? Again, try not to place judgement. Own up to mistakes. Speak up when you witness inequity. Think about who is being left out of the conversation, and don’t just invite them to the table, help to elevate their voice.

This work is mentally, emotionally, and physically challenging, and there are no quick fixes. We are all learning and growing on this journey together, and each one of us will make mistakes. Please remember to extend compassion to yourself and to others in those moments and commit to doing better moving forward.

Interested in having dialogue? Email [Athena.horton@uhkc.org](mailto:Athena.horton@uhkc.org)



**Have you been affected by COVID-19?**  
We’re here to help.

Call **816-404-6222** to learn more about our counseling services.  
For immediate care, call the Disaster Distress Helpline:  
**800-985-5990.**



### Virtual Room of Refuge

Check out our page at <https://bit.ly/communityroomofrefuge>. We hope you can use the resources on this page to take a short break when you may need one.



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## University Health Behavioral Health Services

**UH Truman Medical Center**  
2301 Holmes Street  
Kansas City, MO 64108

**UH BH Crossroads Counseling**  
300 West 19th Terrace  
Kansas City, MO 64108

**UH Lakewood Medical Center**  
7900 Lee’s Summit Road  
Kansas City, MO 64139

**UH BH Lakewood Counseling**  
300 SE 2nd Street  
Lee’s Summit, MO 64063

For more information, call

**816-404-5709**

or go to

**BehavioralHealthKC.org**

Are you on ?  
UH Behavioral Health is too!



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## OUR NOBLE CAUSE

Dedicating our professional lives to accepting people as they are today, bearing hope for their future, and using compassion to empower those we serve.