Mental Health and the Strength of Our Connections

“I didn’t want to tell anyone because outwardly I seem like a completely normal person and I didn’t want that image to be hurt, especially if the thoughts of suicide would go away.” This quote from an anonymous University of Utah student highlights the invisibility of mental health issues on a college campus and the stigma that can go along with getting help. If this seems like an extreme example, consider this: Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young men in Utah and our state consistently has one of the highest suicide rates in the country. In fact, a recent survey of University of Utah students revealed that more than half had experienced suicidal thoughts. Chances are, if you aren’t suffering from a mental health concern, the person in the office next to you or the student you might see walking past your office is.

The most recent Utah Higher Education Health Behavior Survey found that a third of females and a quarter of males attending public colleges in Utah needed formal mental health treatment. A national survey by the American College Health Association shows that in the past year, 45% of students felt that things were hopeless, 50% felt overwhelming anxiety and 30% felt so depressed that it was difficult to function. The situation is even more complicated for students, staff and faculty with minority statuses. One study shows that most Black Americans with major depressive disorder do not receive treatment. Similarly, research indicates that among Latina/Latino individuals with a mental health issue, fewer than 1 in 11 contact a mental health professional—and this despite

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Debra Daniels Presented the 2013 Rosa Parks Award

On Monday, January 21, 2013, Debra Daniels, Director of the Women’s Resource Center and Co-Chair of the Student Affairs Diversity Council, was honored with the Rosa Parks Award at the NAACP Salt Lake Branch’s 29th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Luncheon at the Little America Hotel. This award was established for the dual purpose of honoring the courage with which Rosa Parks challenged racial segregation in Montgomery, Alabama, and gave momentum to the struggle for racial equality in American and, honoring annually a woman whose life in Utah has helped to “Keep the Dream Alive”.

“The NAACP Salt Lake Branch is proud to present the 2013 Rosa Parks Award

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mental health cont.

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the fact that adolescents from this group experience more mental health problems than their White counterparts. Several studies show that Asian Americans are also much less likely than White Americans to mention their mental health concerns to a friend or relative. Among American Indians, the suicide rate is almost double that of White Americans. And because of access issues, American Indians are also much less likely to seek treatment. Because of societal pressures and stigma, gay youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people, and this alarming statistic becomes even higher when LGB individuals have multiple minority statuses. Disturbingly, suicide rates for every group, including Whites, are increased when they live in politically conservative communities.

While all of this may seem overwhelming, there are several ways we can be helpful to one another, and one element in particular is very powerful: Our relationships with each other are vitally important to our friends’ wellbeing, and to our own. The odds that you know someone who is suffering from a mental health concern are overwhelming. Much of that suffering is invisible unless the person suffering chooses to share their distress. So reaching out to each other and creating a community that cares is critical. It may sound trite, but we never know how much our kind word, smile or friendship might mean to someone else. The connection we form can be a boost to others and will have a positive impact on our own wellbeing as well. In fact, our mental health is so strongly correlated with the strength of our connections with friends and family that it is the single biggest predictor of life satisfaction and happiness. Interestingly, if you are happy, not only will there be a correspondence between you and your friends’ happiness, but between your happiness and your friends’ friends’ happiness. In other words, happiness is contagious—and not just to people you know, but to the people that your friends know as well. In addition, unlike other forms of wealth, we continue to derive positive emotions from our interpersonal connections with each other. Another way of saying this is that while the shine on our new car will fade, the shine on a friendship rarely does. We matter to each other. Having strong positive connections with others is correlated with doing better at work, getting better grades in school, having fewer physical health problems, and having better mental health. Folks with strong interpersonal bonds live longer, too. The diversity awareness work we do strengthens our ability to connect with each other and in turn helps create an antidote to mental illness, stress, depression and anxiety. Reach out and connect with someone today!
Debra Daniels, Rosa Parks Award cont.

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Award to Debra Daniels for her committed and recognized work in the community. Debra has shown that one person can make a difference. She has devoted many hours of work to helping others. Her personal passion for her work is evident each time that she renders advice, lends a helping hand or comforts those reaching to her for words of encouragement. There are those nameless individuals in the community that Debra gave a warm smile when they needed someone to care. Debra never asked others to do what she could do and that was to help others. It is because of all these things, this prestigious award is presented to Debra.”

While Rose Parks herself presented the first award given in Salt Lake in 1992, Debra received the award from Jeanetta Williams, President of the NAACP Salt Lake Branch.

In response, Debra Daniels states that “Receiving the NAACP 2013 Rosa Parks Award holds a very special meaning to me. It represents an acknowledgement of my work from the African American community and an organization that has worked so diligently to assure the right of all human beings. Receiving this award on the 2nd inauguration of our first African American president on the Day honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and just days shy of Rosa Parks 100th birthday was incredibly significant. I am humbled and deeply honored to have received this award and to have my work recognized among those who have made it possible for me to reach many of my aspirations.”

Top 10 Ways to Support Other’s Mental Health

1. Acknowledge that mental health issues exist
2. Listen nonjudgmentally
3. Be there; show up and offer support, call, e-mail, walk together or take their kids for an afternoon.
4. Encourage them to eat well or better yet share a meal together.
5. Invite and accompany to an activity.
6. Help them expand their social support (e.g., church groups, volunteer groups, community groups)
7. Encourage moderate physical activity or exercise
8. Refer or assist them in consulting with a professional
9. Provide them with good information about mental illness and treatment options. For example: http://www.apa.org/topics/index.aspx
10. Tell them about NAMI: http://www.nami.org/
**February Events**

**Tuesday, February 12 at Noon, Union Ballroom**
Laurie Goodstein looks for stories that will bring to life how Americans live out their faith in an age of increasing religious diversity and conflict over the limits of religious expression. She has won respect in the field by refusing to treat each faith or religious group as a monolith, and reporting on the variety of voices and debates inside of groups — from Muslims to Roman Catholics to evangelical Christians.

**Friday, February 15th—March 2nd, Pioneer Theatre**
Clybourne Park: Currently the most electrifying new play on Broadway, Clybourne Park is a fascinating, insightful, and often brutally funny look at the way we talk about—or avoid talking about--race in America. When a white couple wants to buy a home in a gentrifying, all black neighborhood of Clybourne Park, Chicago, they unknowingly reenact the same tense drama, fraught with miscommunications and barely suppressed hostility that occurred fifty years earlier in the same house.
http://www.pioneertheatre.org/

**Friday, February 15th - Sunday, August 11th, UMFA**
Bierstadt to Warhol: American Indians in the West
Bierstadt to Warhol: American Indians in the West is an ambitious exhibition comprising over 100 oil paintings, sculpture and works on paper drawn from primarily from the Diane and Sam Stewart Collection. It examines depictions of American Indian identity (by both natives and non-natives) in a diverse array of styles: from the traditional European schools to Modernist abstraction and conceptual renderings of cultural motifs. This exhibition negotiates the devices and implications of portraiture as an historical genre, to show that a portrait can either fashion a mythologized persona or an authentic personal dynamic that speaks to lived experience.
http://www.umfa.utah.edu

**Wednesday, February 20th at Noon, Gould Auditorium, Marriott Library**
Building Bridges Among Faith Traditions
Making Sense of Sandy: Christina and Buddhist Responses to Natural Disasters.
Lecture by Dr. Beverly Foulks McGuire

**Wednesday, February 27th 7-9pm, UMFA**
UMFA Spring Film Series co-presented by the Utah Film Center: On the Ice
As a complement to Bierstadt to Warhol: American Indians in the West, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts is partnering with the Utah Film Center to present three films created by Native American filmmakers whose work represents an evolution of the Native American storytelling tradition.
http://www.umfa.utah.edu

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For more information and resources, please visit:
sadc.utah.edu

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Debra Daniels, Co-chair Women’s Resource Center  
Kari Ellington, Co-chair Student Development  
Michael Bard, Registrar’s Office  
Kajsa Berlin-Kaufusi, Center for Learning Abroad  
Arlyn Bradshaw, Dean of Students Office  
Karen Cone-Uemura, Counseling Center  
Branden Dalley, Union Administration  
Nelly Divacian, International Center  
Kris Fenn, Bennion Center  
Eduardo Galindo, ASUU Student  
Adrienne Howell, TRIO  
Nedra Hotchkins, Graduate Student  
Scott Jensen, Housing & Residential Education

Trisha Jensen, Orientation & Leadership Development  
Suzanne Jones, Registrar’s Office  
Carol MacNicholl, Center for Disability Services  
Kai Medina-Martinez, LGBT Center  
Susan Miller, Campus Recreation  
Sana Muller, ASUU  
Sam Ortiz, Student  
Rachana Patel, Office of Admissions  
Cynthia Powell, Student Health Center  
Valery Pozo, Career Services  
Erica Rojas, Financial Aid & Scholarships  
Claudia Snow, Union Administration