

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Marking 75 Years of Mental Health Advocacy:
Leaders meet on Capitol Hill to Amplify Voices and Foster Compassion**

Salt Lake City, Utah, May 13, 2024; Since 1949, the month of May has been designated Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States, aiming to raise awareness and educate the public about mental illnesses. However, despite 75 years of awareness efforts, openly discussing mental health remains challenging in our country.

On Wednesday, May 15th, national mental health organizations, leaders, and advocates will gather in our nation's capital to host a groundbreaking briefing featuring speakers and panelists. These conversations seek to increase awareness through personal stories and firsthand experiences while shedding light on critical issues in mental health across our nation.

One individual leading this charge is Christena Huntsman Durham, Vice President of the Huntsman Family Foundation and host for The State of Mental Health in America Briefing on Capitol Hill.

“Our family is committed to eradicating stigma around mental health in our communities and country. We all must work together and remember that mental health is health. We have to normalize talking about mental wellness and letting individuals know that you are not the only one. There is hope and healing and our family mission is to use our voices and resources to spread this message of hope” said Christena.

According to data from the CDC, more than 1 in 5 U.S. adults live with a mental illness today, presenting numerous challenges that can be difficult to understand, further complicating accurate and compassionate care. As noted in the American Psychiatric Association's 2023 impact study, unmet mental health care needs continue to grow at an alarming rate.

“While our nation is rich with resources to address mental health, we must do more since we are in a mental health crisis,” said Tonja Myles, Community Engagement Advisor for the Huntsman Family Foundation. “One way to do this is to bring together all continuums of treatment, to

address how we can make compassionate and high-quality treatment available to all individuals who need it. Those who do this work every day know firsthand what the needs are and are able to give insight on how to accomplish this.”

According to a recent 2023 poll conducted by the American Psychiatric Association, even small acts of kindness can have a profound effect on our well-being. The poll revealed that 89% of respondents felt better after performing an act of kindness, while 90% experienced similar feelings after receiving one. These results illustrate how each of us has the ability to shape positive mental health outcomes through simple acts of kindness.

Additional attendees participating in the briefing include Laura Evans, AVP of Public Policy and Government Affairs at Vibrant Emotional Health; Eric Decker, Former NFL Professional Football Player and Philanthropist; David Covington, CEO & President of Recovery Innovations, Inc.; Janice Guitreau, Mental Health Advocate; Karen Stubbs Church, Assistant Secretary for the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) Office of Behavioral Health (OBH); Larissa May, Founder of Half the Story; Rawle Andrews, Executive Director of the American Psychiatric Association Foundation; and Ryan Cain, Fund Recovery Executive Director."

If you or someone you know is experiencing an emotional, mental, or substance use crisis, call, chat, or text 988.

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About the State of Mental Health in America Briefing

The State of Mental Health in America Briefing will take place on Wednesday, May 15th from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm (EST) at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center Senate Side Room 203, First St. SE, Washington, DC 20515. This gathering of experts, moderated by Tonja Myles, Huntsman Family Foundation Community Engagement Advisor, and Laura Evans, AVP of Public Policy & Government Affairs at Vibrant Emotional Health, will focus on critical issues facing mental health in our nation.

About The Huntsman Family Foundation

The Huntsman Family Foundation is committed to providing comprehensive cancer treatment, mental health, and substance use disorders treatment. The family's work across cancer and mental health has included significant financial contributions, research support, and the establishment of programs aimed at advancing the understanding and treatment of cancer and mental health conditions. The Huntsman Family initiatives include The Huntsman Mental Health Foundation, The University of Utah Huntsman Cancer Institute, and The Huntsman Mental Health Institute.

For more information, visit <https://huntsmanfamilyfoundation.org>.