



May 26, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local Mental Health Issues Revisited by AVMF on June 12

Members of the Aspen community are invited to participate in an open conference, The Divided Self: Crisis in Paradise Part II, focusing on the state of local mental health issues in Aspen and Pitkin County. The event, sponsored by the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation and presented by faculty members of the new University of Colorado Depression Center, is Friday, June 12 from 8AM to noon in the Hotel Jerome Ballroom. Suicide prevention trainings are being offered in the afternoon at the Schultz Health and Human Service Building across from Aspen Valley Hospital. Registration is necessary and can be completed by visiting the Foundation's website www.avmfaspn.org. A charge of \$20 per person includes breakfast.

The conference will look at key mental health disorders, as well as traditional and cutting edge treatment options. A review of local mental health resources, and guidance in finding the correct treatment, includes how to find the right mental health provider.

The faculty for the conference features Drs. Michael Allen, Alexis Giese, Emily Andresen, and Jonathan Birnkrant, all licensed and practicing psychiatrists. Drs. Allen, Giese, and Andresen are affiliated with the University of Colorado Depression Center, and Dr. Birnkrant is a local practicing psychiatrist affiliated with the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation.

Afternoon trainings in suicide prevention take place at the Schultz Health and Human Service Building across from Aspen Valley Hospital. QPR – question, persuade, refer – is a suicide intervention method that helps community members respond to suicide concerns.

The Divided Self is part of a new, more far-reaching initiative of the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation, including a comprehensive Mental Health Needs Assessment and community wide suicide prevention trainings conducted by the University of Colorado Depression Center. The Needs Assessment includes individualized key informant interviews, five focus groups, and extensive data collection from local, state, and national resources including private and governmental agencies. The results and recommendations of the Mental Health Needs Assessment will be made available in late summer.

The Aspen Valley Medical Foundation began facilitating community wide discussions of local mental health issues five years ago with the first *Divided Self* conference, focused on suicide and substance abuse. That year, there were 17 local suicides in the first six months of the year...a dramatically large number for a community of this size. In subsequent years, the topics turned to anxiety and depression, with programs featuring Joel Brence, MD, local psychiatrist; Tom Crum, local expert on conflict resolution; Robert Freedman, MD, chairman of the University of Colorado's Department of Psychiatry; and Jeannie Ritter, Colorado's First Lady.

For further information, contact the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation at 970-544-1298 or www.avmfaspn.org .