

From The Aspen Times
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Dear Editor,

Unexpected emergencies are always a shock, and it's a huge relief to discover an effective source of emergency help.

On Wednesday evening, we were presented with an unexpected mental health emergency involving a very bright, sensitive teenager far from his broken home, a kid in a severe emotional crisis, whose life was at risk.

Fortunately, the Aspen Hope Center was created two months ago by Kris Marsh and the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation. The center is conceived as a referral center to help members of our community find appropriate mental health resources. It is also a crisis center, staffed 24 hours a day, every day, by professionals.

My late-night phone call concerning the crisis was immediately answered by Michelle Muething with sensitive and helpful advice. The next morning Laura Smith quite literally rode to the rescue and spent hours in sympathetic, professional and effective counseling, backed up by consultation with Dr. Jonathan Birnkrant. This action saved the day and possibly saved a child from harm.

Until you confront this kind of emergency first hand, it's difficult to understand just how essential an immediate professional response is. What a fantastic resource we have in the Aspen Hope Center!

If you or someone you know has a mental health problem or, especially, a crisis please call the professionals at 925-5858 without delay; they will answer at any hour of the day or night, they will help, if necessary they'll send a crisis team to respond, and they just may help you avoid a tragedy.

Even if you don't have a mental health problem, others in our community surely will. To help maintain this resource, please visit the website at www.aspenhopecenter.org and send a contribution to support this organization. We can't afford to be without them.

Mike Simmons
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