

Media Coverage: MHFA offered for the first time in Prince Albert, SK.

BY ANGELA HILL, HERALD STAFF

The first of many Mental Health First Aid courses for front-line workers wrapped up Thursday afternoon. It is the first time the workshop, which gives information about mental health problems and a model for how to help someone going through a crisis, has been offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association in Prince Albert. "You can give them the mental health first aid they require," said Doug Kinar, executive director of the Prince Albert branch of CMHA and the course instructor.

Through funding from the Community Initiatives Fund, the course is being offered free of charge to 170 front-line workers, including teachers, communication-based organizations and health-care workers. The course will give tools to these people so they are able to help someone having a panic attack, coping with depression or dealing with a substance abuse disorder. The tool includes nonjudgmental listening and encourages professional supports. "When you have a few tools to use you are a whole lot more confident going into a situation that you are going to do it right or say the right things," said Anna-Marie Huybrecht, program director at CMHA and class participant.

The course can help change the way people think about helping someone going through a crisis. "It's not as simple as telling someone to pull up their socks or snap out of it because that's just glib advice that's not valid," Kinar said. "The workshop is giving people the tools and understanding of the process so they can be a real help in a mental health first aid crisis."

Melissa Sommerville school social worker, was glad to be enrolled in the first class. "I work directly work with children and families who are often dealing with mental health issues," she said. "It's good for people (to take) ... (helping) in a crisis, this is what you need to remember." Kinar said he has received positive responses from this first group of participants. "It's a very useful tool that's going to help them improve the way they do their work," he said.

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