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Mental health awareness walk planned **(<http://www.cullmantimes.com/local/x157477736/Mental-health-awareness-walk-planned>)**

By David Palmer
The Cullman Times (<http://www.cullmantimes.com>)

CULLMAN — While mental health workers are seeing dramatic advancements in medications and counseling needed for patients, the state of Alabama's budget crisis is threatening to hamper efforts to reach the needs of a wider range of people.

In an effort to keep focus on mental health issues, Mental Healthcare of Cullman is organizing its first-ever Mental Health Awareness Walk. The event is scheduled May 12 at 10 a.m. and will begin in front of Cullman City Hall.

"We'll be asking local businesses to add a green ribbon, which is the symbolic color for mental health awareness. In addition, the people participating in the walk will have brochures to hand out to shoppers around town," said Chris Van Dyke, director of Mental Healthcare of Cullman.

At the conclusion of the half-mile walk, which will stick to the sidewalks around town, the group will return to city hall for a talk by mental health professionals.

"This is an opportunity to keep people aware of the issue. It's still a topic that a lot of people don't want to talk about," Van Dyke said. "More and more medical research is showing the connection of mental health to a person's overall health. We want people to not be afraid to talk about it and realize that this is part of the overall health picture."

At the conclusion of the awareness walk, visitors to city hall will have an opportunity to hear from medical professionals and ask questions.

"The information we will be providing is something everyone can use. We'll be able to show people what to do if there is an issue in the family and who to turn to for assistance," Van Dyke said.

The walk is open to anyone interested in spreading the word about mental healthcare. T-shirts are also available at Mental Healthcare of Cullman.

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