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[Tamuning, Guam] — Today, the Guam Behavioral Health & Wellness Center (GBHWC) and their partners joined Governor Lou Leon Guerrero and acting Lt. Governor Tina Muna Barnes in proclaiming May 2019 as Mental Health Awareness Month.

1 in five 5 adults will experience a mental illness in their lifetime but less than half will seek help. In a recent epidemiological study, almost 14% of Guam adults reported a debilitating mental condition or emotional problem but only 6% reported receiving treatment. Additionally, suicide is the 5th leading cause of death on Guam with close to 60% of all suicides occurring in people under 30 years of age.

This May, GBHWC is aiming to raise awareness of the importance of mental health and break the stigma against mental illness. “We want the community to understand that there is no shame in seeking help and that taking care of our mental health is just as important as our physical health because it permeates through every aspect of our lives,” says Deputy Director, Carissa Pangelinan.

To celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month, GBHWC will be hosting a series of events to promote the wide array of services that are available to our island community.

- Friday, May 3, 2019 there will be a Legislative Resolution at 3pm at the Congressional Building in Hagatna followed by a wave at the ITC intersection from 4-6pm.
- Sunday, May 5, 2019 from 10am-2pm there will be a Community Outreach Fair at the Agana Shopping Center.
- Monday, May 6, 2019 is National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day and all are encouraged to wear green and show their support for mental health.
- Thursday, May 9, 2019 the department will host an Open House where Governor Lou Leon Guerrero will perform the ribbon cutting of our new Patient Affairs office.
- Friday, May 10, 2019 we are encouraging the community to wear teal in honor of our nurses.
- Friday, May 24, 2019, we will join the community at the Relay for Life
- Friday, May 31, 2019 we will have a Mass and Procession at the Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center in honor of St. Dymphna, the patron saint of Mental Health.

- GBHWC will also be hosting a series of mental health awareness trainings including Mental Health First-Aid, ASIST, and SafeTALK. A training schedule will be released May 1st and will be open to the public.

“Mental Health Awareness Month is an opportunity for us to celebrate the positive impact that we can have on the lives of children, youth, and adults when we are able to integrate positive wellness strategies into every environment,” said Director, Theresa Arriola. “When we focus on promoting positive mental health skills, we can help these individuals and thereby our whole community thrive.”

The Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center is located in Tamuning and is Guam’s only public mental health and substance abuse agency. GBHWC offers child outpatient services through I Famagu’on-ta; healthy transition services for young adults through Project Tulaika; adult outpatient services; Professional Support Services (Psychological, Psychiatric, and Pharmacy); outpatient drug & alcohol services through New Beginnings; residential recovery homes/services; child inpatient, adult inpatient and medication clinic services; sexual assault and abuse services through Healing Hearts Crisis Center; and Prevention and Training services through P.E.A.C.E.

For more information, on Mental Health Awareness Month Activities, please contact Nia Serneo at 647-5317 or 647-1901.

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