

THE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF THE GREATER LA CROSSE AREA



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SHINING STAR AWARDS MAY 8; AWARD RECIPIENT NAMED

LA CROSSE, Wis—In celebration of Mental Health Month, the 2013 Shining Star Award recipient will be introduced at a reception and brief program organized by the Mental Health Coalition (MHC) on Wednesday, May 8, 5-6:30 p.m. in the Cargill Room at Riverside Center II.

The 2013 recipient is Judy Shoults, a member of the La Crosse Area Suicide Prevention Initiative, community booster, and strong advocate on behalf of those affected by mental illness. That advocacy, she says, includes a focus on breaking the stigma associated with mental illness: “I live with major depression and I refuse to be ashamed of my disease.”

She speaks to groups, sharing a message that she hopes will shape a better public understanding of mental illness while also reaching members of the community who need support.

“Anyone of us could experience a mental illness,” Shoults said. “It could happen to anyone and this is an important topic to talk about. There is a healing power and hope that goes along with sharing the story and it’s important not to isolate yourself.”

In selecting Shoults as the 2013 Shining Star, Patti Jo Severson, chair of MHC indicated that many of the misperceptions associated with persons living with a mental illness are dispelled when people step forward to openly discuss it. “They may be our friends, neighbors, co-workers. One in four people will experience mental illness at some point in their lifetime. We are very proud of Judy in raising awareness and reducing stigma,” Severson said.

For her part, Shoults credited many caring and compassionate individuals who were present in her life including her family, friends and those in healthcare. “Support and acceptance is out there but we have to talk about it. I can’t stress enough the importance of the people who work in the medical community and the professional care I received. They helped me get to where I am today,” she said.

The Shining Star event is in its sixth year. Over 125 friends, mental health providers, and members of the coalition, are expected to attend the event. The MHC was created with the mission of reducing stigma attached with mental illness and the Shining Star is the organization’s premier public event for achieving this goal.

Don and Roxanne Weber are serving as sponsors of Shining Star.