



MATT JONES/THE STANDARD-JOURNAL

From left, the Community Youth Suicide Prevention Forum was led by panelists Dr. Thor Edmiston, Warrior Run School District superintendent; Jennifer Jones, CASSP coordinator with CMSU; Dr. Sam Faulkner, Geisinger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health; and Tia Dreckman, counselor with the Milton Area School District.

## CSIU receives \$3.5M mental health grant

**BY MATT JONES**

THE STANDARD-JOURNAL

LEWISBURG — There is great power in naming a thing, particularly when that thing makes us either uncomfortable or afraid, as it is only when a thing has a name that we can begin to

talk openly about it.

This was the case at the Community Youth Suicide Prevention forum that took place at Lewisburg's Campus Theatre on Tuesday morning. It was organized by the Mental Health and Resiliency Community of Practice, a

coalition of educators, inter-faith agencies, and community organizations that have joined together to address the mental health needs of students within the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) region.

CSIU, Page A4

FROM PAGE A1

“We still haven’t broken the stigma about talking openly about suicide,” said Dr. Bernadette Boerckel, chief outreach officer for CSIU and facilitator of the Mental Health and Resiliency Community of Practice. “Today was much needed for that group to do that. I think they will be supportive of helping others talk about it in a productive way.”

At the forum — which was attended by community members, parents, and representatives from CSIU’s 17 school districts — Boerckel announced that CSIU recently received a federal grant from SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The IMPACT grant, which stands for Improving Mental Health Practices Across Communities Together, provides \$3.5 million over four years, to serve the five-county region.

“We can provide district- and school-level comprehensive mental health needs assessments,” explained Boerckel. “Based on those needs, this grant can fund free, targeted, professional development for staff members in school districts around suicide prevention, including youth mental health first aid, trauma informed practices, QPR, which is Question, Persuade, and Refer, and many other topics that districts may be needing.”

Broadly speaking, a community of practice refers to a group of people who come together to organize themselves around a common concern. In the case of Mental Health and Resiliency, CSIU has joined forces with Geisinger, Evangelical Community Hospital, Susquehanna Valley United Way, County Mental Health Providers, the McDowell Institute at Commonwealth University, and

various other educational affiliates to address youth suicide.

“Some of these resources that are available, even more so now through these grants, have been available for some time, but we don’t get to the point where people even access them until you can get through having a normal conversation about it being okay to get these resources,” said Dr. Tim Knoster, professor of Exceptionality Programs at Bloomsburg University and affiliate of the McDowell Institute.

“We have lots of resources that schools are accessing, and a lot of resources are available at community organizations that work with youth too, so it’s increasing awareness of what’s available and getting a single point of contact for getting those resources,” said Knoster. “And that single point of contact would be Julie Petrin.”

Petrin, who serves as the director of Special Education within the Warrior Run School District, recently accepted a position as CSIU’s director of Behavioral Health Supports.

“We’re hopeful to use her expertise because she has familiarity with our district,” said Warrior Run School District Superintendent Dr. Thor Edmiston, who served as one of four panelists at the forum. “I think today’s point was to show people that there are a lot of resources out there, and that all you have to do is ask for that help. I think that’s the most important part of today.”

To access support from the the Mental Health and Resilience Community of Practice, contact Boerckel or Petrin at 570-523-1155.

**Matt Jones** can be reached at 570-742-9671 ext. 119 or email [mattjones@standard-journal.com](mailto:mattjones@standard-journal.com)