



LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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Lawrence University Awarded \$25,000 Grant by J.J. Keller Foundation for Community-Wide Suicide Prevention Training

APPLETON, WIS. — Lawrence University has been awarded a \$25,130 grant from the Neenah-based J.J. Keller Foundation, Inc. to coordinate free suicide prevention training by mental health experts for Fox Valley area school districts and youth-serving nonprofit organizations.

Under the direction of Kathleen Fuchs, director of counseling services at Lawrence and adjunct associate professor of psychology, the grant will provide advanced clinical skills training and evidence-based gatekeeper instructor training for area clinicians, student services staff and staff from youth-serving non-profit agencies. The goal is to train key personnel to better recognize early warning signs of suicide risk and connect young people to existing mental health services for earlier and more effective intervention and treatment.

The Keller grant comes on the heels of a three-year \$300,000 grant Lawrence was awarded last October by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to implement a comprehensive initiative designed to lower suicide risk and enhance protective factors among Lawrence students.

"The SAMHSA grant was terrific news for the Lawrence community, but the college strongly wanted to ensure that the broader Fox Cities community also benefited," said Fuchs. "The terms of the SAMSHA grant limited what we could spend on activities that won't directly benefit a college audience. Through the generosity of the Keller Foundation, this grant will enable us to reach beyond the campus borders and extend some benefits of that federal grant throughout the Fox Valley.

"Given the recent tragedies in the community, we felt it imperative that we accelerate our timetable for carrying out the planned training and make every effort to extend its community impact," Fuchs added. "With the help of the Keller grant, we'll be able to begin that training as soon as this March."

David Mays, a forensic psychiatrist at the University of Wisconsin and former director of the forensic program at the Mendota Mental Health Institute in Madison, will lead two day-long training workshops in mid-March on mental health and suicide assessment skills for invited participants from the Lawrence and Fox Valley communities. The workshops will include a day of in-depth core competency training specifically for higher-ed, K-12 and community practitioners that will enhance skills in effectively guiding persons at high suicide risk through critical moments in their lives.

Workshop participants will include representatives from local public and private K-12 school districts, Fox Valley Technical College, UW-Fox as well as Affinity and ThedaCare Behavioral Health units. Other key area nonprofit organizations such as NAMI, the YMCA, Goodwill-Harmony Cafe, Boys & Girls Club and others will be invited to participate.

Additional training this summer will utilize QPR -- Question, Persuade, Refer -- an evidence-based program that empowers ordinary individuals to recognize early warning signs of an individual in distress, open a supportive dialogue that persuades the individual to accept help and connect them to mental health services.

"The QPR model is based on a 'chain of survival' approach much like CPR," Fuchs explained. "With just a 90-minute training session, participants can learn to be 'gatekeepers' who know how to recognize early suicide warning signs and reach out to people in distress."

Fuchs said the QPR gatekeeper instructor training sessions made possible by the Keller grant will involve 62 community members. Those trained instructors will then conduct QPR gatekeeper training for their organization's internal and external audiences over the course of the ensuing 18 months.

"Through the QPR instructor training, we'll be able to provide organizations with a self-sustaining resource, allowing us to create a tremendous impact with a relatively small up-front investment," said Fuchs. "Our first 62 trained instructors will subsequently train at least 1,550 new gatekeepers. If each gatekeeper reaches at least 50 students, colleagues, friends and neighbors, we will have put 77,500 members of our community within reach of early intervention."

The Keller Foundation's primary mission is to support organizations, projects and programs that address the causes and consequences of poverty. The focus population is homeless and disadvantaged individuals, the elderly, and children and youth. The Foundation was formed by John J. "Jack" and Ethel D. Keller in 1991 and their family has continued the Keller legacy of giving since their passing. Nearly \$25 million has been given to more than 300 community organizations over the past two decades.

About Lawrence University

Charting an uncommon course in higher education for more than 160 years, Lawrence University uniquely integrates a college of liberal arts and sciences with a conservatory of music, both devoted exclusively to undergraduate education. It ranks among the nation's best small, private colleges, and was selected for inclusion in the book "Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools That Will Change the Way You Think About College." The development of multiple interests and community engagement are central to the Lawrence experience, where classes or creative and research projects tailored to students' educational interests and life objectives are prevalent.

Lawrence draws its 1,450 students from 46 states and 51 countries. Its picturesque, residential campus is nestled on the banks of the Fox River in Appleton, Wisconsin. For more information about Lawrence University visit www.lawrence.edu