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IDMH Conference Will Address Needs Of Trauma Workers

🕒 March 29, 2012 👤 Kelsey Damrad 📁 News 💬 0

On Friday, April 20, SUNY New Paltz will host the ninth annual Institute for Disaster Mental Health (IDMH) conference.

This year's conference is geared toward mental health professionals, students, emergency managers and volunteer responders, focusing on those who are traumatized by responding to disasters, IDMH Coordinator Meredith Johnson said.

"The well-being of trauma workers and emergency managers is closely tied to the success of disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts," Johnson said. "The care that responders provide to others can only be as good as the care they provide themselves."

Johnson said this year's conference is unique because it intends to discuss the resilience of the helpers and responders as well as encourage the maintenance of their well-being. Those dedicated to helping others often ignore their own self-care.

According to the IDMH website, the 2012 IDMH conference will feature a series of presenters providing their expert opinions on the correlation between alleviating stress and increasing the benefits of trauma work.

Each speaker will discuss a series of topics from "foundational concepts, current research and recommended practices" to various "lessons learned" during their own personal experiences in the field.

Speakers include traumatologist Charles Figley, Ph.D, the Paul Henry Kurtzweg M.D. distinguished chair in Disaster Mental Health (best known for his instrumental influence in making Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis) and Richard Tedeschi, Ph.D, professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, recognized for his work on Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG).

In a lecture he gave to Intermediate Level Education students about PTG the United States Army School of Advanced Military Studies in Leavenworth, Kan. last year, Tedeschi said trauma is a threat to cognition and psychological integrity and provides a catalyst for PTG.

His work focuses on the U.S. Army soldiers and, like Figley, he attempts to provide avenues of resilience and relief for those suffering from trauma, according to newpaltz.edu/idmh.

"The theme [of the conference] correctly points to the key issues of modern disaster work: the human factors," Figley said.

Figley said he hopes to shed light on different solutions meant to fix the imminent stress and trauma that follow a disaster. He said he hopes to connect with an audience full of disaster workers and their supervisors.

Intending to use his published books on trauma, resilience, coping, traumatic stress injuries and treatment methods, Figley plans to share advice on better leadership skills regarding human factors and Disaster Mental Health.

"The best plans in the world won't work if the workers have poor disaster resilience leadership or there is insufficient attention to the mental health and psychosocial needs of the workers," Figley said.

Another one of the conference's big attractions is the keynote presentation "New Strategies for Reducing Responder Risk: From Pre-Deployment Screening to Post-Deployment Support," given by national American Red Cross leaders Rob Yin, manager for Disaster Health Services at the American Red

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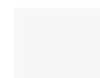
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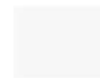
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