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Mental Health First Aid boosted by the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council

Some see arming citizens with guns as a way to deal with social problems brought to attention with the recent mass shootings. The [Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council](#) is working to help arm everyone with something quite different: mental health training.

Recently both President Obama and Governor Hickenlooper have urged greater support for behavioral healthcare initiatives. In concert with these directives, the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council and its member organizations are taking steps with an exciting, groundbreaking concept: mental health first aid.

One out of four people in Colorado struggle with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders and other mental health challenges. There is hope in the form of mental health first aid response by trained citizens who can recognize the signs and apply evidence-based actions to connect those in crisis to support systems that can help recovery.

Mental Health First Aid is a groundbreaking public education program that helps the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The program is managed, operated and disseminated by three national authorities, with local coordination by the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council.

The program has proven to be an effective aid to people needing mental health intervention and assistance. In addition, graduates of the Mental Health First Aid courses have reported that the training they received has been beneficial to their own mental health.

With the help of the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council, health organizations and government agencies in Colorado are offering an interactive 12-hour course that presents an overview of mental illness and substance use disorders in the U.S. and introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews of common treatments.

Those who take the 12-hour course to certify as Mental Health First Aiders learn a 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources and knowledge to help an individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help care.

More information about Mental Health First Aid and listings of training classes are available from the Mental Health First Aid Colorado website at mhfacolorado.org.

The Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council is committed to making an impact on making mental health a manageable priority for effective healthcare for Colorado residents.

Colorado company sheds a new light on lighting technology

It's been said necessity is the mother of invention. It certainly has been for Longmont entrepreneur Anthony Catalano, and in a very big way.

Catalano's wife didn't like the fact their Longmont home had no patio lighting. With no power outlets on the patio, Anthony purchased some ordinary battery-powered incandescent lights. Running on four AA batteries, the lights lasted only 45 minutes.

Catalano, with a background in electronics, knew there had to be a better way of solving a 21st century problem than with old technology. Incandescent lights produce mostly infrared, non-light producing heat, a wasteful and inefficient way to create light. With incandescent lights, a relatively large amount of energy is used to produce some light.

The proverbial light bulb turned on above his head, and it was a different kind of light bulb. Why not explore the use of LED lighting?

"I set about investigating how to build a circuit, build the electronics and build a prototype LED bulb," Catalano explains.

He solved the problem. He had a much better alternative for lighting, and his wife was happy.

Catalano knew he had a winning idea. "I figured if it works for my wife and that application, probably people throughout the world will want this product."

The winning answer is the LED concept. LED (light-emitting diodes) bulbs were first used for status, indicator, directional and accent lighting, but recently have advanced to be able to

produce high brightness, the kind that would nicely light up a patio. LEDs are able to convert electrical energy into a great deal of light, the way incandescent bulbs do, but efficiently, without the extra, wasted energy. LEDs can run on portable battery packs and even solar energy.

Catalano hired an engineer and a marketing expert. The start of his company, TerraLUX Illumination (terralux.com), was on its way. And the rest is, as they say, history.

In two years Catalano's company has grown from fewer than ten employees to more than 40 now, with revenues in eight figures. His company is indeed a bright light on the green, economically-sustainable scene.

The LED solution is clear-cut: the purchase price for a basic LED bulb for a home is \$40; it lasts 12 years. The old-fashioned incandescent bulb is 75 cents to buy, but burns out after six months, using twice the power of an LED.

Half of TerraLUX technology is the manufacturing of modules/engines for buildings, new or retrofit. The other half of manufacturing goes to portable lighting. His company is an industry leader, producing the "smartest" LED module on the market, with cost-saving automated integration technology.

Catalano's Colorado success story is one of many that have brought "clean-tech 2.0" industries to the state with energy-efficient alternatives to outdated technologies. TerraLUX is in a geographically hot area for these new industries. Just a few months ago GE purchased Albeo Technologies, a Boulder LED company.

Several Colorado venture funds have helped this revolution, helping put Colorado on the green map: Aravaipa, Infield, and 9th Street. Yet, even with great new infusions of capital, these innovative enterprises are still taking a backseat to conventional energy-generation companies - the battle is not yet completely won.

Why cleantech 2.0 is different

Clean technology conjures up big, bulky, risky ventures that crash and fail. Sucking money out of government subsidies. Clobbering investors. Economic failures. Few jobs created by such promise. "The green sad story," as one NY Times op-ed piece called it.

The tale of cleantech has been a tale of broadbrushing, misinformation, and stereotyping. The media love anecdotal stories.

But here's a dirty little secret. Data from the financial and academic community tell a different story, a rosy picture. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers/NVCA and the Cleantech Group, venture capital investment in clean tech has been steadily increasing during the last decade. Almost a fourth of all venture capital now is put into cleantech. The truth is, venture capital is risky, but essential to US innovation and progress. According to the Brookings Institution, three times as many jobs are created in the green sector with a million dollar investment than in the fossil fuels arena. Over the last few years, clean energy jobs growth annually has been more than twice as fast as the rest of the economy.

In the world of the big cleantech goliaths, a subset of cleantech has been quietly making an appearance as lean, trim, swift gazelles that are greatly impacting the landscape without fanfare. I call this evolutionary achievement "cleantech 2.0."

But first, a refresher. How does one define clean technology? Clean technology is a response to the environmental and natural resource constraints of the 21st century and represents one of our nation's greatest challenges and opportunities. Clean technology is a diverse range of products, services, and processes that harness renewable materials and energy sources, that dramatically reduce the use of natural resources, and cut or eliminate emissions and wastes. The bottom line is that clean technology improves the lives of everyone.

Colorado is a national leader of this evolution in clean technology, a hotbed of cleantech activity, and the state has benefitted tremendously. Much of this has been accomplished through nationally-top ranked research centers at the National Renewable Energy Lab, the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, and the Colorado School of Mines. Together with local incubators and start-up companies, a tight-knit community of entrepreneurs, investors, and service providers has created a synergy that is unsurpassed anywhere else.

So what is cleantech 2.0?

Cleantech 2.0 fulfills the lofty but realizable ideals of clean technology.

What sets cleantech 2.0 apart is its optimum efficiency and impact.

At the 2012 National Clean Energy Summit in Las Vegas, President Clinton underlined, "...renewable energy is vital, but it always begins with efficiency..." Cleantech 2.0 is also efficiency-tech. Efficiency-tech focuses on building efficiency, transportation efficiency, water efficiency and location efficiency.

Colorado efficiency-tech companies are typically smaller, more nimble, low-capital-intensive, providing increased resource efficiency to their customers and a safer, more equitable climate for investors. It's a win-win for everyone in Colorado.

Tied to efficiency is the true impact that is generated. Colorado cleantech 2.0 company activities and investments have been officially recognized by the state government for fulfilling the promise of true impact, defined by the Global Impact Investing Network: "Impact investments are made with the intention to generate measurable social and environmental impact alongside a financial return." These impacts benefit everyone in the state, and even translate globally.

Clean technology in Colorado and elsewhere is shattering the myth that clean technology is not competitive with their conventional counterparts. Not only is clean technology competitive, but in many ways superior to the "other" industries. Cleantech 2.0 is demonstrating that.

The viability of cleantech 2.0 is strong and the prognosis is for a healthy future.

Colorado Access ABC: More help and hope to catch the mentally ill falling through the cracks

Providing mental health treatment for those who cannot afford it is an uphill battle in Colorado and the nation. The Colorado Access ABC program has led the way in providing mental health assistance where funding has been in short supply. With Obamacare expanding resources, health plan provider Colorado Access is poised to serve a larger number of people than ever before with superior services to treat those with mental health disorders.

Mentally ill people on the streets and in our society are a concern for everyone. Recent events of mass shootings have raised concerns that not enough is being done in identifying and treating those with mental health problems.

There is no easy panacea for the mental health care deficiencies in our country, but proactive efforts and strategies are tackling this issue.

One gaping hole is that the indigent and poor are a large group with mental health problems who are falling through the cracks.

There is hope that Obamacare's expansion of Medicaid will boost mental health treatment. Not all states may be sufficiently on board for an increase of treatments for the poor. But Colorado is positioned to take on a larger role to provide this much needed care.

The existing mechanisms in Colorado have been providing mental health care under strained and difficult conditions. Because they don't qualify for Medicaid, up to ten individuals a month with severe mental health disorders are turned down by the Charg Resource Center, an organization that provides outpatient therapy and social services, some of it funded by private donations. According to Charg executive director David Burgess, "Medicaid has the best mental health plan available. It provides much better coverage than most private plans."

Not treating mentally ill people is a vicious circle, because many are unable to work because of their disorders. Treatment would help put them back into the workforce, benefitting not just them, but taxpayers, who are burdened assisting indigents on the streets and homeless shelters, and in hospital emergency rooms.

A Colorado organization is mobilizing to make sure the Medicaid expansion will effectively include more individuals with behavioral health disorders. Health plan provider Colorado Access, with its Access Behavioral Care (ABC) program that administers Charg treatment of patients, is committed to expanding its ABC program by a third by the end of 2013.

Without continued and increased funding, the lives of people like Denver resident Zim Olson would be jeopardized. Olson has been described as a mathematical genius, but his severe schizophrenia has seen him in and out of mental institutions all of his life. Thanks to services like Charg and Colorado Access ABC, his illness has been controlled, covering \$800 monthly for his medications. He says he doesn't know where he'd be without these organizations' help in providing his medications, professional therapy and medical care, and the social support that he has received. Olson is very active in his own mental health care and has become a strong advocate for publicly-funded mental health treatment for the indigent.

With heightened concern for mental health issues in our country, and their dangerous repercussions, these publicly-funded efforts promise to be important steps in helping provide solutions.
