Support for veterans brings hope

Ohlone College steps up its mental health assistance

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Bratton started the helpline, if people felt they could get help, she said. “But I think there’s that stigma of oh, there’s something wrong with us.”

Students can be embarrassed or ashamed to address mental health problems, because this is a leading factor in why some people will never discuss their emotional issues or address the true problems at hand.

For those who do, though, the results can be remarkable.

“The mental health program helped me tremendously after bouts of depression and an anxiety attack,” student Khalid Iqbal said. “Rosemary, my therapist and life coach, was able to provide me with the tools to proactively deal with depression and anxiety.”

O’Neill offers students up to six counseling sessions per semester. The student health center is also available to all students with or without current medical insurance for the standard copay.

Entering college can be a tough time in a young adult’s life, especially if the student has decided to leave home in order to do so. O’Neill helps students get involved in mental health and in living in the real world, coping skills for dealing with the stresses of college.

“It’s good to talk about problems,” she said. “There’s stress in our lives. We’re a busy culture. We have so much going on. There’s no reason to think we have to hold it inside and on our shoulders.”

Veterans who need help can call the confidential toll-free Veterans Crisis Line 24 hours a day at 800-273-8255 and press 1 to reach Veterans Affairs’ representatives for support. Resource providers reach out to those who feel hopeless.

“One of the big problems is that people are afraid of the stigma with getting help,” Franklin said.

Veterans Affairs officials have seen decreases in suicide rates when veterans take advantage of the VA health system.

“What we’re seeing is that people, especially the younger veterans, are stepping up and asking for help,” Kemp said. “Treatment does work.”

For more information, go to http://steppholone.org. To see a personal counselor, or visit a primary care provider for a check up, call 510-659-6258 to make an appointment, visit the third floor of Building 7 or go to www.ohlone.edu/org/healthcenter.

Staff writers Albert Rebosura, Maria Garcia-Hernandez, Martha Nunez and Mitchell Walther contributed to this report.

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Ohlone also has an outreach program, STEP Up Ohlone that has been hosting numerous events around campus to raise awareness about mental health and invite student and faculty participation.

“That’s our big campaign to educate people about mental health and ask really sincerely to try really sincerely to break the stigma that it means there’s something wrong with us if we have an emotional problem,” O’Neill maintains that the majority of society doesn’t need to be stronger.

While optimistic, Franklin and Kemp said officials have not heard.

“I want to bring trauma counseling to firefighters, paramedics, police officers and those people,” Kemp said. “Because they have the same rates of PTSD as veterans do, and nobody talks to them.”

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