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Contact Information:

Sean Rice
507-535-5750 (days)
507-279-0967 (evenings)
seanr@zumbromhc.org
www.zumbromhc.org

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Flood Recovery Partners to Cease Outreach Services in Fillmore, Houston and Winona Counties

Rochester, Minn. – Flood Recovery Partners, a program that provides triage and education services to residents in Fillmore, Houston and Winona counties, is phasing outreach services out for these counties effective November 16, 2008. This date coincides with completion of the program's FEMA-funded grant.

"Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center has done an exceptional job developing and coordinating this program," said Lorraine Pierce, mental health program consultant, Minnesota Department of Human Services. "To date, the staff at Flood Recovery Partners has assisted more than 6,100 people, which is far more than we had anticipated."

Originally created in August 2007 to provide mental health services to people living in federally declared disaster areas, the program served residents from 16 different communities in Southeast Minnesota. Flood Recovery Partners staff also met with children and adolescents at five schools, including Rushford-Peterson, Lewiston-Altura and Houston.

"Our mission is to provide services to anyone affected – directly or indirectly – by the flooding," said Heather Geerts, project manager. "We have seen a pretty even mix of adults, adolescents and children from Fillmore, Winona and Houston counties."

Geerts said the majority of visits were for stress- and anxiety-related management that required a single crisis counseling session to help people understand how their reactions in response to the disaster were normal. The program also offered single and group settings for residents who required more intensive assistance and educational materials on effective strategies to handle stress, anxiety and depression.

Over the past year, the Flood Recovery Partners program provided a variety of services and resources, including:

- Crisis counseling

(more)

- Disaster education and support for all county residents
- Grief and stress management seminars
- Family skill-building and parenting seminars
- Youth education and support groups
- Referrals to available county-based resources

Although the program's federal funding will end in mid-November, county residents can access other local resources such as community social services, area clinics, public health departments and long-term recovery committees such as the Rushford Area Disaster Alliance for Recovery (RADAR) in Fillmore County and Winona Wabasha Interfaith Disaster Response (WWIDR) in Winona County.

Recognizing the importance of proactive mental health services, the Minnesota Department of Human Services recently awarded a \$100,000 state grant to Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center to provide counseling services to people affected by the June 2008 flooding. The grant applies to residents in Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston and Mower counties.

"With Zumbro Valley's mental health expertise and experience coordinating the 2007 flood recovery efforts, the new grant seemed like a natural fit," said Pierce. "This grant allows Flood Recovery Partners staff to provide many of the same services under the original program as well as comprehensive counseling for more serious disorders."

Program staff will provide a variety of services, ranging from information on available resources to comprehensive counseling using assessment, diagnosis and therapy by licensed professionals.

Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center has set up offices in Rochester, Austin and Rushford to offer close, convenient access for residents. The Rochester office is located at 343 Wood Lake Drive SE; the Austin office at 111 11th Avenue NE; and the Rushford office at 901 Home Street. People can also call toll-free at 1-800-422-0161.

About Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center

Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center enhances the quality of life for residents in southeastern Minnesota by serving as a community resource for the understanding and treatment of behavioral health and substance use disorders. The organization collaborates with government agencies, schools, non-profit groups and others to provide programs dedicated to improving the mental health of adults, adolescents and children. Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center is a private, non-profit organization serving Olmsted and Fillmore counties. For more information, visit our Web site at www.zumbromhc.org or call 507-289-2089.

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