

TRUE STORIES

FLORIDA MAN SAYS PRIMATES SWARM PROPERTY

A Florida man says he's got a monkey problem. News outlets report that Brian Pritchard of Ocala says troops of rhesus monkeys swarm his property two times a day to swipe food in a feeder meant for deer. Cameras he set up to photograph the deer instead captured pictures of dozens of monkeys. He has counted as many as 50 monkeys at a time.

Pritchard says the primates have eaten 250 pounds of food in recent days.

Officials say the monkeys probably came from Silver Springs State Park about 4 miles away. The park recently shut down two areas because of increased monkey presence. It's estimated that 200 monkeys live in the park, but many are seen beyond its boundaries.

CALIFORNIA TEEN WINS LOTTERY TWICE IN A WEEK

A California teen is celebrating two big lottery wins in a week.

The California Lottery says 19-year-old Rosa Dominguez won \$555,555 on a \$5 scratch-off ticket purchased at a gas station. After that win, she said she was nervous and "just wanted to cry." A few days later, she bought another \$5 scratch-off ticket at a different station and won \$100,000. The Lottery didn't say when the tickets were purchased.

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The View

Mental wellness: A community imperative

Over one million Coloradoans will suffer from a mental illness or substance use disorder this year. Of those, few will be diagnosed and fewer will receive treatment.

As a small community, we are acutely aware of the impact to families, friends and our community, when we lose someone to suicide, when someone's mental illness goes undiagnosed and untreated, or when someone's substance use impacts their ability to live productively.

In the face of these challenges and the continued stigma associated with mental illness, suicide and substance abuse, members of the Regional Behavioral Health Commission have been working to address the community's needs.

The commission — comprised of local leaders from the medical and mental health fields, social services, education, law enforcement and non-profits involved in behavioral health — is focused on specific initiatives aimed at improving mental wellness in our communities.

For 2017, this includes efforts to increase community awareness by offering Mental Health First Aid trainings for community members. Other focuses include supporting substance abuse prevention efforts by facilitating a Community That Cares (CTC) coalition to support our youth and reduce adolescent substance use, and expanding access to behavioral health care.

The commission recently decided to expand its membership, and is seeking an additional member of the community — ideally someone with experience with a mental health or substance use disorder — to join.

Over the past six months, Mental Health First Aid has been offered 12 times to over 150 individuals, ranging from teachers to health care providers, from volunteer firefighters to parents, and from medical providers to local business employees. With each class, a new group of individuals become advocates for mental wellness and learn how to assist their peers. Eight hours of your time can make a differ-

ence in someone's life.

Students in Telluride and Norwood can now obtain mental health counseling via their computers, in addition to in-person visits from therapists from the Center for Mental Health. This program, which utilizes licensed Colorado therapists who reside elsewhere, was successful in its first four months and will continue this fall. It allows students a greater choice of therapists and also provides anonymity and privacy in our small community.

In addition, starting in September, a part-time bilingual and bicultural therapist will be available to work with our Spanish-speaking students in the schools.

The commission is also working to install permanent prescription drug collection boxes so that unused and expired prescription drugs do not end up on the street or in our watershed. Stay tuned as we work to establish these facilities in Telluride and Norwood.

The CTC coalition has expanded in Telluride, with over 20 leaders and nearly 40 community members working to reduce youth substance use. By engaging with area youth, using local survey data, and working with existing organizations such as local mentoring groups and the school district, the coalition is identifying areas of the community that can use more support. (More members are needed — please contact me to learn how to join the coalition. We are particularly interested in youth, parents of young children and community members who care about our youth.)

While much remains to be accomplished, the commission aims to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, to expand discussions in our community and to advocate for resources for mental wellness.

Paul W. Reich is the behavioral health program manager for the Tri-County Health Network. For more information about joining the commission or becoming involved with Tri-County Health, call 970-708-1096 or email pmbh@tchnetwork.org.

PAUL REICH
GUEST COMMENTARY

Editor's Note:

The View is a space in the *Telluride Daily Planet* for local voices on local matters. We're always looking for more opinions and more voices in our pages, so if you've got something to say we'd love to hear it. Guest opinions should be about 750 words long and, as always, not contain any personal attacks. Please include picture and a tagline, with general information about the author. This is your space — use it. Questions? Manuscripts? E-mail: Editor@telluridedailyplanet.com

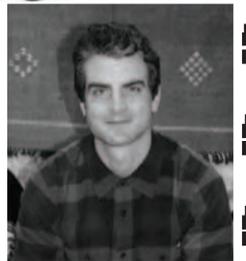
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6-10:30pm

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Free Sides To Go
\$45

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