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“Question, Persuade, Refer” training helps RMC employees keep suicide-aware

BILLINGS, March 10, 2014 – Fredricka Gilje of the Montana Chapter of the Association for Suicide Prevention offered two sessions of QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention and intervention training at Rocky Mountain College in January and February. Katie Carpenter, associate dean of student life, and Cynthia Hutchinson, counselor at RMC, arranged the training opportunity. The QPR curriculum helps participants to interact with people in crisis enough to get them referred to stabilizing care.

“Obviously, suicide and suicide prevention are critical issues in our business,” said Brad Nason, vice president for student affairs. “The goal of this workshop is to ensure that faculty and staff members have the skills to identify students in crisis and the training to effectively intervene.”

Gilje said, “The QPR program has been widely accepted in many age groups and organizations. I was really pleased with the engagement of the 42 RMC employees at the presentations.”

“I try to keep it open,” she said. “Suicide prevention is relevant to all walks of life, but particularly to several factors that influence any college: transitional stress as students move out of their homes and into new environments, influence of alcohol or drug experimentation, and the developmental age of impulsivity.”

“Staff response at RMC was very positive and engaging. I emphasized that students may be more open to support staff because they may not hold a grade over them… [the training] may have really have connected them to something they offer to the students, that’s very special for their positions.”

“The February 25 presentation was with both faculty and staff,” Gilje said. “With faculty I go into more into research-based results of what we know of students and suicide prevention from the most recent January conference of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.” Gilje is a fulltime volunteer with a Ph.D. background in nursing education.

Nason said he is excited to have extended QPR training beyond student life staff. “Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people, age 15-24. The College has been very fortunate, and for the most part we've avoided significant problems among our
students,” he said. “Our community does a good job of identifying any students potentially in crisis and matching them with appropriate support services. Ongoing QPR training will better equip members of the faculty and staff to effectively intervene on behalf of any student in crisis.”

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