

## **First responders receive mental health training**

### **Training**

**By Paula Frew**

For the Sidney Daily News

SIDNEY — Area first responders received mental health training from local psychologist, Dr. Jacqueline Allen. Allen has practiced in a variety of settings and operates a private practice at 110 E. Poplar St., Suite 7, Sidney.

The presentation focused on three different mental health issues: depression, anxiety, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These issues were presented as issues the first responders may encounter in themselves or their coworkers or family and as they may experience with the public when fulfilling their duties.

Per the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), more than 15 million Americans suffer from depression and anxiety. First responders have a high rate of diagnosed depression and anxiety.

Allen shared that clinical depression is more than just feeling sad. That depressed mood or a loss of interest must last more than two weeks and can be accompanied by weight or sleep change, difficulties with concentration, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, or recurrent thoughts of death.

Participants viewed a video in which an officer shared issues he dealt with and how important it is to take time for yourself and to take care of yourself.

“PTSD is essentially really bad anxiety. Anxiety has levels. First, there’s fear. Then there’s Generalized Anxiety, and these people worry about everything. That’s a rough one. With this you have difficulty concentrating because you constantly worry about everything. The most extreme point is PTSD,” said Allen.

Allen has specialized training in PTSD.

PTSD symptoms include exposure to an event where you feel threatened, thoughts that continually intrude, avoidance of triggers, mood change, hyper awareness, and not a reaction to drug or alcohol abuse. PTSD is a natural response to extreme trauma.

Allen discussed things that protect us from depression,

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**Dr. Jacqueline Allen discusses some points of her presentation with Officer Mike McRill. Her mental health presentation concerning issues such as depression, anxiety and PTSD was offered to first responders in the area.**

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anxiety, and PTSD. These include exercise, genetics, social structure, IQ, good relationships, and access to mental health services.

“There’s a stigma to seeking mental health care. If you have cancer or a broken leg or something, you get a lot of sympathy. People want to help you or to know how you’re doing. With depression people say you’re crazy or tell you to just get over it and cheer up. We need to try to change that response,” said Allen.

Chief William Balling had discussed such issues with Allen and felt that it is important information for the first responders in the area to have for their dealings with the public and for themselves and their families and co-workers.

Balling, at the beginning of the session, said, “One of the things we want to make sure of is, when you do retire, when you do leave here, everything is great. We want you to have a happy retirement. If there is something we can do for you, we want to do it.”

The writer is a regular contributor to the Sidney Daily News.