



## Mental Health Counseling

Mat Balcetis, a mental health counselor at Alegen Health Care, was the guest speaker at the Treynor Optimist Club on July 28. Mat has worked at Bergan Mercy for 36 years. He counsels all ages of people, from children to older adults.

Mat talked mainly about depression and anxiety. Depression can have a large variety of causes. For example, older people can suffer from adjusting to loss of friends, children moving away, or just loss of the ability to get around freely.

Mat asked "How do you recognize depression?" Do I feel sad? Do others think I look sad? Depression can often be recognizable by several clues. Has the person's appetite for food changed? Is he sleeping more or less? Does he want to avoid going out in public, avoid making decisions, or not seem productive? Larger symptoms

include hurting himself or others, irritability, or crying a lot.

Anxiety can cause a person's heart to feel like it is racing, or a feeling like you are going crazy. People with more anxiety are more likely to think about suicide and have panic attacks.

Help is available for people with depression or anxiety. The best place to start is to go to the family doctor and get a physical. There are a variety of short term and long term medications to treat depression and anxiety. Some people respond to medications and some respond more to talking to mental health professionals or a listening friend. Therapeutic pets can also help.

Mat also talked about trauma, like in the theater shooting. Trauma has two symptoms, physical and mental. Physical symptoms include injuries. Mental symptoms include frightening thoughts and heavy feelings.

Signs of trauma include reluctance to go back to a place somehow related to the trauma, numbness or extreme emotions, and turning to drugs and alcohol. It is not helpful to force a person to talk about the trauma or to tell them everything will be OK. It is helpful to be a good listener and have good eye contact with the person when listening. Good questions to ask the person are "I see this. How does that affect you?" and "What are you going to do about it?"