



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE SPEEDY FOUNDATION AND OPTUM TO OFFER MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING SESSIONS
THROUGHOUT IDAHO**

Training sessions teach people how to help someone facing a mental health issue.

BOISE, IDAHO – SEPT. 15, 2014 –The Speedy Foundation, an organization dedicated to preventing suicide through education and outreach in the athletic community, is partnering with Optum Idaho to offer free Mental Health First Aid training sessions throughout the state.

Mental Health First Aid is a day and a half course that teaches people how to recognize the most common signs of mental illness including depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and substance abuse, and the steps they can take to help someone get professional help. The Speedy Foundation will fund 10 training sessions over the next year and act as a statewide champion for suicide prevention and mental health awareness. The courses will be taught by certified Mental Health First Aid instructors from Optum Idaho.

“The Speedy Foundation is committed to increasing awareness about suicide prevention and helping people who are struggling with mental illness,” said Linda Peterson, mother of the late Jeret “Speedy” Peterson and founder of The Speedy Foundation. “Our mission aligns perfectly with the goals of Mental Health First Aid training, and we look forward to sharing this program throughout Idaho.”

Untreated mental illness has serious consequences. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the suicide rate for middle-aged people in Idaho (ages 35 to 64) jumped 53 percent between 1999 and 2010 to around 27 deaths per 100,000 population, the third highest rate in the nation.

Mental Health First Aid is listed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, a database of mental health and substance abuse interventions that catalogues programs that have been shown to be helpful for people with mental illness. According to the National Council for Behavioral Health, since it was first used in the United States in 2007, the adult Mental Health First Aid program has been delivered to nearly 100,000 Americans through a network of more than 2,500 instructors.

“We are partnering with the Speedy Foundation to offer Mental Health First Aid Training sessions that will help more people recognize the signs of mental illness and ensure that they get the care and treatment they need,” said Becky diVittorio, executive director of Optum Idaho. “We believe these training sessions will help people with mental illness reach long-term recovery.”

The next course will be offered in Idaho City on Thursday, Oct. 2, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday, Oct. 3, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The training will take place at Robison Community Hall located at 206 W. Commercial Street. For more information or to register for a future session, contact Optum Idaho at 208-914-2013 or amanda.lehto@optum.com.

About The Speedy Foundation

The Speedy Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to understanding mental illness, preventing suicide and fighting stigma through education, research, and advocacy. It was formed in 2011 in the loving memory of Idaho native Jeret "Speedy" Peterson, an Olympic freestyle aerials medalist whose life was characterized by his service to others.

About Optum

Optum is a leading information and technology-enabled health services business dedicated to helping make the health system work better for everyone. Optum Idaho manages outpatient mental health and substance use disorder services for adults and children enrolled in Medicaid through the Idaho Behavioral Health Plan.

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