



THE MURRAY STATE

NEWS

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The Mental Health Issue:

A deep dive into Mental Health
at Murray State

Photo by Sam Mitchell

Counselors deserve institutional support

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Tackling the rigors of college life—be it academically or personally—is a trying process for anyone to go through. At its best, these challenges provide students with the opportunity to build fortitude and independence in their lives. However, if there are any lessons we’ve learned from the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it’s that our mental well-being is just as integral to our health as the rest of our body.

During the pandemic, universities turned to telehealth counseling services to meet the needs of students despite social distance restrictions. Nearly four years later, these resources still provide an integral service for students; those who do not feel comfortable meeting in-person can still benefit from having an on-campus connection. Regional students also can reach out to counselors, even from other campuses such as Hopkinsville and Paducah.

At a time when the need for human connection was so strong and the chances so rare, telecounseling gave students a tether to campus life we so desperately needed.

However counselors also deal with unique strains to their work, ones that can and have hindered their ability to empower students with the skills necessary to improve their mental health.

With a team of only five people—including

only three main campus counselors—many students are left wait-listed and eventually triaged by severity and availability. For many counselors, the overwhelming amount of cases, unlivable wages and personal stress create an ultimately unwinnable situation with an even harsher question: ‘How do we foster the importance of mental health in students, when we cannot acknowledge the toll on our own?’

Last year, Murray State’s Board of Regents unveiled a new initiative through their 2023 Quality Enhancement Plan. One of the primary goals of the MSYou Matter: Racers Care is to instill a culture that encourages awareness and understanding of mental health throughout campus—not just for students, but for faculty and staff as well.

In a community, our strength comes from our ability to collectively and individually nurture ourselves. Counselors provide not only a safe space, but pivotal groundwork for building a strong base towards holistic wellness. But in order to strengthen and promote the key com-



Scottlynn Ballard/*The News*

ponents of that health, it must first be reflected in the foundation. Livable wages closer to the average salary for a clinical mental health counselor in Kentucky would reduce stress. Internal resources geared towards supporting the mental health needs of the counselors would help bolster feelings of support, not only among colleagues but also by the institution.

Our counselors are key to cultivating a campus culture that centers mental health awareness and resilience. Consistent, institutional support amplifies the heart of Murray State’s initiative: that each person on campus matters.



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A student giving campaign focused on our community coming together to support each other will help make sure that all students have access to the resources we need to succeed!

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Unraveling faculty burnout at Murray State

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The impact of chronic workplace stress on faculty well-being was a concern for academic leaders pre-pandemic. Still, faculty burnout has reached a tipping point over the past few years.

A study from the Healthy Minds Network reports that 64% of faculty surveyed feel burned out or exhausted. At Murray State, faculty feel the effects of burnout daily.

Claire Fuller, dean of the Jesse D. Jones College of Science, Technology and Engineering, said her experience with burnout was impacted by COVID.

“I was fairly new to the dean’s job at that time and had a number of initiatives I was interested in pursuing as dean. Those got put on the back-burner as we pivoted to working to provide an excellent education in the face of COVID,” Fuller said. “Things didn’t get back to normal for a long time – some would say they still aren’t back (to normal) – and in that time period, I became burned out.”

Antje Gamble, associate professor of art and design, said her burnout has impacted her teaching.

“Teaching is separate in the sense that the energy to really want to update classes and make new experiences for students,” Gamble said. “I think the above and beyond has gone away. I’m still trying to do those things, but I just have less energy and really, frankly, time to do it. In part because I know I need to rest, but we’re always being asked to do more.”

Danish researchers recently released a study highlighting the gender gap in academia- specifically service work.

After a series of interviews with male and female faculty, researchers determined men are more likely to avoid service work (committees, leadership and coordinator roles).

“In fact, more than half of them practice evasive relational work, meaning that they actively try to avoid these kinds of tasks,” according to the study.

Andy Black, associate professor of English, said

one issue he and other faculty members have is questioning the job and its importance.

“I think one of the biggest issues that I – and any professor has – is ‘Why does what I do matter?’ I have a lot of different answers for this question – that the work in my classroom is vital – but some days I come home feeling discouraged and unproductive,” Black said. “But I’m glad to say that within a few days, after a good class filled with productive conversations by engaged students, I’m able to move beyond this. But it’s tough sometimes, and the pandemic only exacerbated that.”

Gamble said she does not believe the University is taking the well-being of its employees seriously. Gamble remembers a meeting between the Gender Equity Caucus and key administrators.

“We had lots of immediate concerns because people had their kids at home, they were taking care of their parents or siblings. It was a lot,” Gamble said. “Then we were also signaling long-term concerns like burnout, and I don’t think those concerns were taken seriously at the time. They don’t seem to be taken seriously now.”

As dean, Fuller said she takes burnout seriously among her faculty.

“We do take burnout seriously and know faculty struggle with it, especially during/since COVID. My hope is that those struggles have gotten better for most people,” Fuller said. We try to help at both the collegiate and departmental level by being flexible, providing information about resources to help with mental health issues, etc. We have tried to increase social and collegial interactions within departments and across the college.”

Black said hearing his impact on students, even former students, is enough to remind him of the importance of his work.

“A few weeks ago, I heard from a student from a few years back that I had made a difference in her life,” he said. “That I had helped her. That was enough to remind me that I could do productive work even when I didn’t realize I was doing it. Every time I feel burned out, I try to remember that it’s the students that matter.”

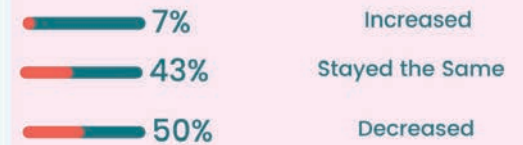
Faculty Burnout



Burnout is 69% higher among women, when compared to male colleagues

Source: American Psychological Association

Since the start of 2020, enjoyment of teaching....



Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education

Sometimes feel “physically exhausted” 38%

Often or always feel “emotionally exhausted” 38%

Often or always “worn out” 40%

Source: InsideHigherEd.com

53% of faculty reported leaving their jobs due to burnout, increased workload and stress

Source: Campus Safety Magazine

Graphic by: Jill Smith

Symptoms

- CHANGE IN APPETITE
- WEIGHT LOSS OR GAIN
- ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION
- FATIGUE
- SLEEP DISORDERS
- LACK OF JOB SATISFACTION

Burnout 101

Source: Devlinpeck.com

Causes

- HEAVY WORKLOADS
- STAFF SHORTAGES
- DEFICIT OF EDUCATION FUNDS
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- LOW SALARY

College students face shortage of counseling services

Ania Boutin

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Murray State looks to meet the growing need for mental health support with training programs for faculty and staff.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training teaches people to identify and respond to signs of mental distress. Murray State has offered this program since 2021, with the goal of trained faculty helping University counselors keep up with demand.

Dr. Angie Trzepacz, licensed psychologist and director of MSU's counseling services, says the training has been a needed addition.

"The most challenging part is that we don't have enough counselors to meet the students' needs," Trzepacz said. "We sometimes have to place students on a waiting list until a spot becomes available, or we have to refer them to other services, such as the Psychological Center or off-campus mental health providers."

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, mental health issues have been on a steep rise in young people, with teen depression doubling between 2010 and 2019. This increase only continued in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

College students are at the center of this mental health crisis. According to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health, the percentage of students visiting counseling centers on college campuses (30%) is rising disproportionately compared to increasing enrollment rates (6%).

"We are very happy that more students are becoming

aware of our services and that more students feel comfortable talking to a counselor about their mental health concerns," Trzepacz said. "But, unfortunately, we do not have enough counselors in the Counseling Center to keep up with the demand."

With colleges unable to employ enough counselors to meet campus needs, MHFA training presents a potential solution. This course teaches participants to better understand and identify mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The educational training equips people with the skills needed to support those experiencing a crisis.

"Many individuals on campus have completed the course, and I think it has helped them be more aware of signs and symptoms that someone might be struggling with mental health issues," said Trzepacz. "I believe it has helped them feel more comfortable talking with students and other individuals about mental health, and it has increased their awareness of the resources available on campus and in the community, as well as when and how to access those resources or refer others to those resources."

A study funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council proved the effectiveness of MHFA training in improving mental health literacy for those who completed the training and in increasing support for those with mental health issues. The training equips nonprofessionals with the skills needed to aid students amidst the counseling shortage.

"Mental Health First Aiders are neighbors, parents, and friends... [they're] anyone who wants to make their community healthier, happier, and safer for all," according to the MHFA website.



WHAT IT COVERS

- Common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- How to interact with a person in crisis.
- How to connect a person with help.
- Expanded content on trauma, substance use and self-care.

Source: thenationalcouncil.org
Graphic by Jill Smith

Many Murray State faculty and staff have taken advantage of the training in the hopes of offering further support for students.

"I have definitely had some individuals reach out to me after taking the course to consult with me about students that they are working with," Trzepacz said. "I think those relationships and collaborations across campus are very important, because we all need to work together to support our students."

The University's Counseling Center is located in the Oakley Applied Science Building and is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Same day walk-in appointments are accepted from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. All services are confidential and free of charge. To set up an appointment with the Counseling Center, email them at msu.counselingcenter@murraystate.edu. To learn more about MHFA training, visit <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/about/>.

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QEP announces plans to prioritize mental health

Madison Miller
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Murray State has recently introduced a new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), the ‘MS(You) Matter: Racers Care’ initiative, designed to prioritize the mental well-being of students.

The plan defines two primary goals: to foster a campus culture that recognizes the significance of mental health and to enhance students’ comprehensive understanding of mental well-being.

Alyx Shultz, professor of agriculture and co-director of the QEP, highlighted that the mental health focus within this QEP was selected following surveys conducted across campus. These surveys consistently received results showing students need help with overall well-being, including mental health.

“We are here to make sure students succeed,” Shultz said. “And I think this is a really important way that we can help students...do that.”

Signs depicting the ‘MS(You) Matter; Racers Care’ plan have recently been positioned across campus. The plan’s visibility will increase throughout its five-year implementation, particularly this fall with the ‘Green Bandana Project’ launch across campus.

The Green Bandana Project, a national suicide awareness initiative, seeks to create a visible network of students willing to have conversations regarding mental health.

Following training, the nominated students will at-

tach a bright green bandana to their person or backpack, signifying their openness and awareness of campus mental health resources.

James Rogers, professor of engineering and co-director of the QEP, said the initiative aims to destigmatize mental health issues and promote an environment where open discussions about mental health can occur freely.

“We don’t want mental health (issues) to be something that we feel like we need to keep quiet,” said Rogers. “And that should, hopefully, help students with their overall well-being.”

Additionally, the plan allocates dedicated funding to student initiated events.

These mini-grants are a way for students to get directly involved with enhancing well-being on campus.

“It’s a chance with a little more freedom for students to kind of drive the bus and kind of develop some of these ideas,” Shultz said. “Maybe that looks like you made...running club, you host a 5k run, you buy a bunch of pizzas into T-shirts, and you get together and watch Bluey, I don’t know.”

These mini-grants are awarded of any amount up to \$2,500. During this semester there has been \$50,000 of funds dispersed.

The QEP was created by a team of campus faculty dedicated to student success, including the director of counseling services, various professors and representatives from The Center for Student Engagement and Success and Student Disability Services.



Photo by Jill Smith
 Sign in the Curris Center informs students of latest QEP venture.

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Veteran coordinator shines light on mental health

Bri Hunter

Chief Copy Editor

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Discussions surrounding mental health have become more common in recent years. Resources have increased among various groups, such as workplaces and universities, but while negative stereotypes have decreased among some groups, others still face challenges in addressing mental health concerns.

Marshall Hayes, veteran and military student success coordinator, is a U.S. Army veteran who promotes mental health resources at the University. To Hayes, mental health is a foundation of life.

“If life is a three-legged stool, definitely one of the legs is going to be mental health,” he said. “Physical health has obviously got something to do with it and the community in which we live in provides some of that support as well. Mental health is critical to our resilience, and if we don’t develop good practices, then our entire life is going to suffer as a result.”

Negative stereotypes have always surrounded the topic of mental health issues, especially when it comes to veterans. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is most associated with veterans when it comes to mental health issues. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs, 7 out of every 100 veterans (7%) will have PTSD.

Hayes said being in the military typically comes with the association of having PTSD.

“Not only is that not necessarily true, (but) what we stereotypically think of (as) PTSD is not necessarily realistic,” Hayes said. “(It’s stereotypical to think) People with PTSD are freaking out and acting psychotic, and that’s just not typically happening. More often in severe cases of PTSD, they are more of a danger to themselves. PTSD is important to focus on, but society has

no business stereotyping individuals, or in most cases, it’s not their business.”

When Hayes first came to Calloway County, it was evident there was a shortage of veteran-specific resources available given the rural area and smaller population. Hayes was able to start up a veterans’ coalition locally and bring some more resources.

“They can back pay rent, pay your mortgage if there’s a real need... They can even help you catch up on child support,” Hayes said. “(Salvation Army and Veterans of America) are those two organizations that have the state grant. If they can’t do it, then they’re going to direct you to someone else. Our coalition has about 30 different organizations that are members, and they may not be here in Murray, but they are within the region.”

Hayes said Murray State does a wonderful job providing mental health care for the campus community.

“We also have the counseling services that are through (the psychology department), and a number of their masters (programs) students are working as interns,” he said. “Not only is it available to students, but it’s available to their families in the area or anybody in the area.”

While there are resources available for public use, it can be hard to know how to help someone who is struggling with their mental health. Hayes said he recommends just starting a conversation.

“Be present and ask questions,” he said. “If someone seems like they’re not (doing well), ask them, ‘Are you okay?’ or ‘Are you going to hurt yourself?’ It’s going to be uncomfortable and awkward, but it’s a lot better to ask the question and let them know you care.”

Hayes discussed how dealing with the VA can be frustrating, but there is someone who can help in the end.

“Everyone who is in the military and has separated from the military, as soon as you are associated with



Jill Smith/ The News

Since coming to Calloway County, Marshall Hayes has worked hard to fill the need for veteran-specific resources that were previously lacking.

the VA, you are assigned a social worker,” he said. “A lot of people don’t know they have this social worker, and this social worker may never contact you because they have around 2,000 people that are assigned to them. If you really need them, you (can) call and find out who your social worker is, contact them and then things will start happening.”

If you need counseling services, the counseling center is located in the Oakley Applied Science building

Veterans and Mental Health

In 2021, 6,392 Veterans died by suicide, 114 more than in 2020. Suicide remains the 13th leading cause of death for Veterans overall, and the second leading cause of death for Veterans under the age of 45.

Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

In 2020, 51.2% of U.S. females received mental health services, while only 37.4% of males received mental health services.

Source: National Association of American Veterans

38% of veterans had a code on their medical record for a common mental health disorder.

Source: Mission Roll Call

Dining Guide



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Farm sanctuary helps students de-stress

The end of the semester seems to be filled with stress for college students. Papers. Projects. Extracurricular activities. It can become a bit stressful.

Bethany Wilhelm-Atkins, owner of A Place to Be - Farm Sanctuary, brought animals to the Murray State campus on a chilly afternoon on April 3 for the National Residence Hall Honorary's petting zoo. Students took a few moments out to pet and feed the animals, which included a goat, a mini horse and Loaf, the pig.

Photos by Ania Boutin and Jakob Milani

Left: Bethany Wilhelm-Atkins, owner of A Place to Be- Farm Sanctuary, stands with her mini-horse.

Top right: Students gather to feed one of the goats.

Bottom right: One student feeds the goat.



Students struggle with mental health post-pandemic

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In a post-pandemic world, many people's mental health has changed after years of isolation. Some students have struggled with these changes in their lives, while others have tried to find solutions to better their mental health.

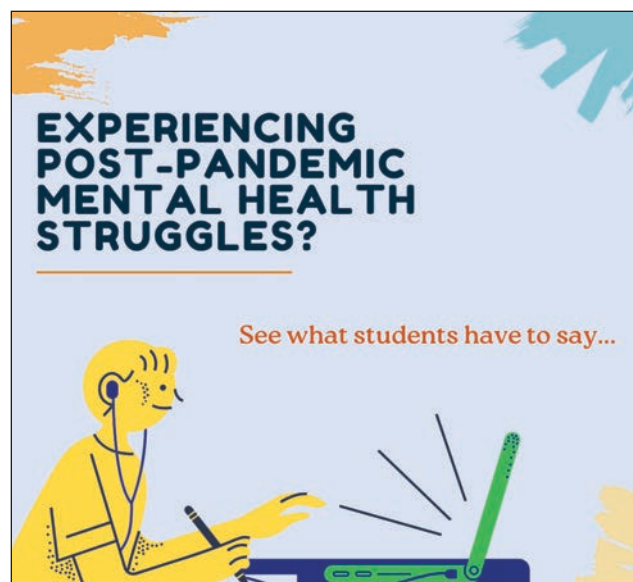
The pandemic was a big strain on millions of people across the globe. One of the most affected groups were students whose entire education system was flipped upside down, with children not having school for several months, followed by many more months of Zoom classes or social distance learning.

Many students struggled with the isolation and loneliness of quarantining which affected their mental health.

“ I can't remember ever struggling with such low lows before COVID, but during and after the pandemic, there have definitely been dark moments.

-Mary Huffman”

Mary Huffman, junior international studies major, said she had a hard time during the pandemic when



Graphic by Caroline Blakeman/*The News*

she never even considered mental health a problem for her beforehand.

“I can't remember ever struggling with such low lows before COVID, but during and after the pandemic, there have definitely been dark moments,” Huffman said.

Going to college also made her feel overloaded with class work and, at times, as lonely as she had once been during the pandemic.

Huffman has made strides to better her mental health by lightening her workload, trying to make friends or keeping in contact with family.

Even for first-year students, COVID had a huge impact on mental health.

Cesar Villeda, freshman economics major, said he found himself being very aware of spreading COVID by trying to stay away from big crowds and keeping to himself.

Villeda said he has tried to find ways to improve his mental health after COVID by hanging with friends, trying to have some time to relax with himself or trying not to focus on factors he cannot control.

“Worrying about things that I can't control only causes stress, so I try to focus on what's in front of me,” Villeda said.

While the physical stresses of COVID have now come and gone, underlying issues regarding people's mental health emerged.

Individuals can help themselves by trying to get involved with clubs or just getting to know others. Lots of clubs or groups on campus would welcome anyone that wanted to join them.

Outside of clubs, Murray State has tried to bring some activities for students, like pet therapy, holding mental health talks and other events.

Murray State offers free counseling services for all students in need. The Counseling Center is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on all weekdays. This service can be done in person or through remote sessions.

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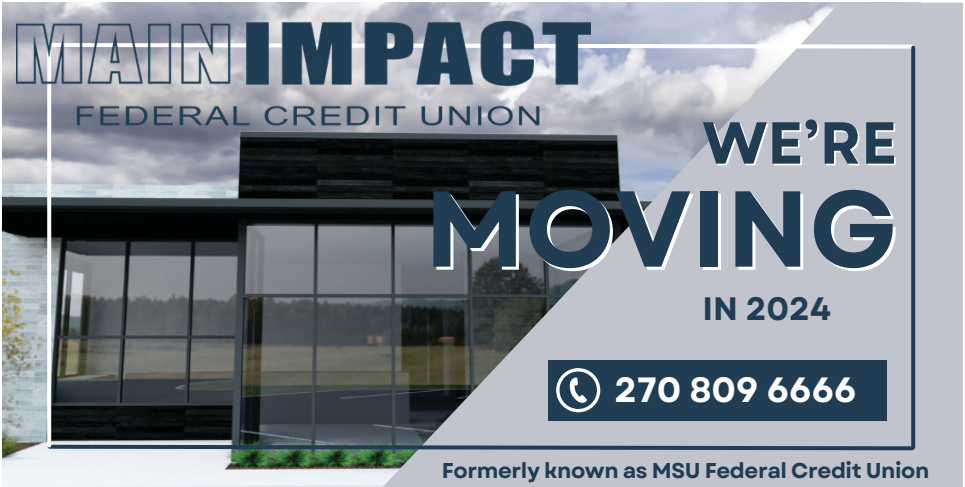
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What we do to de-stress

In the world of journalism, a good mental health is vital to producing good, timely content. As members of the Editorial Board, here is what we do to manage our mental healths.



- Listening to rock music
- Walking pet dog, Eddie
- Watching Criminal Minds
- Drinking a lot of coffee



- Riding motorcycles
- Chilling with husband
- Spending time with pets



- Crocheting
- Listening to music
- Watching Youtube
- Reading
- Coloring



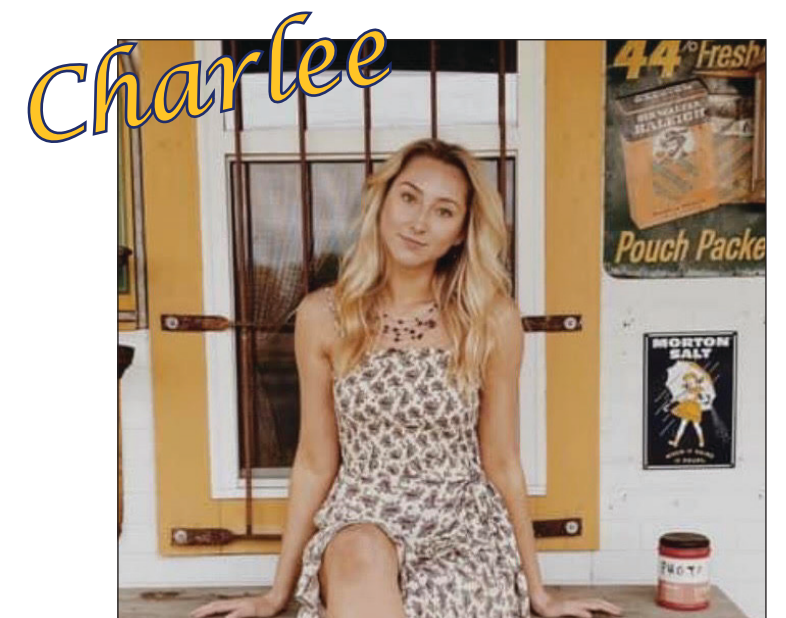
- Listening to music
- Playing video games
- Hanging out with friends
- Watching TV



- Watching one of my comfort shows or movies
- Snuggling with my cat
- Reading
- Painting
- Crocheting
- Playing the ukulele



- Taking three hour naps
- Playing Baldur's Gate III
- Playing D&D sessions with my friends
- Making Spotify playlists



- Chilling outside
- Taking walks

Women's Center provides students with basic needs

Gray Hawkins

Staff Writer

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Inaccessibility to health and hygiene can be a major mental health stressor, but the Women's Center is here to help students with these basic necessities.

The Women's Center is a student resource dedicated to gender equity and inclusion. Abigail Cox, director of women's center, said its services and programs aim to meet student needs and identify barriers on campus. It promotes physical and mental health support and accessibility.

Many essential health and hygiene products are sold at high prices, particularly those catered to women. The Women's Center's stock of period products, personal hygiene supplies and safe sex products are free to students, no questions asked. It also features a second-hand bra closet and cold weather accessories.

Partnerships are essential to offer students this range of products at no cost. The Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority hosts a donation drive every semester to collect the hygiene and period products available in the Women's Center.

"Meeting basic needs is foundational to mental health, which is why we invest so much of our services into providing those services," Cox said. "However, we also recognize that mental health is multifaceted."

The Women's Center partners with LivWell Community Services near the end of every month to provide students with free HIV and Hep C testing. LivWell is able to test 40 students per visit, and they offer free safe sex products to encourage health awareness and the continued use of their services.

Various partnered organizations work with the Women's Center throughout the year on programs addressing discrimination, inequity and interpersonal violence.

"Activities and opportunities that target things like belonging, academic success skills and other healthy habits are important goals for us in planning for next year," Cox said.



Gray Hawkins/ The News

The Women's Center offers students access to specific resources including a bra closet, feminine products, safe-sex products and more.

The Women's Center is in room C102 in the Oakley Applied Science Building, open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information on their services and programs, follow the Women's Center's Instagram page @msu.womenscenter or sign up for its monthly newsletter with the following link: <https://forms.gle/EMrEWJkvtUPy1CHx8>



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Pride Center creates safe environment for students

Gray Hawkins

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The biggest on-campus advocate for LGBTQ+ student safety and mental health is the Pride Center.

The Pride Center is a place for LGBTQ+ students and allies to gather as a community. It offers a relaxed atmosphere where students are welcome between classes to decompress, study, hang out with their peers or participate in weekly activities.

Abigail Cox, director of the Pride Center, called it a point of connection on campus for queer and allied people to foster understanding.

Mental health plays a big part in the services provided by the Pride Center. Many common stressors for University students can be addressed in this safe, supportive environment. On Mondays, the Pride Center offers various stress relief art activities and a low-volume environment. A rotation of allied faculty members are available for tutoring throughout the week.

“We believe it is important for students to have space outside of their residential buildings and classrooms where they are comfortable, connected and supported,” Cox said. “This is an opportunity for them to be recognized and appreciated as their authentic selves.”

The Pride Center has three affiliated student organizations catered toward LGBTQ+ student communities: Alliance, oSTEM and Tea Party.

Alliance is Murray State’s queer social group. Alliance officers organize activities every Thursday at 6 p.m. in the Pride Center, ranging from games and movie nights to queer history education.



Gray Hawkins/ The News

The Pride Center houses three LGBTQ+ student organizations and offers a safe space for students to study and decompress between classes.

Bec Cahoe, Alliance president, said Alliance’s event schedule could change to cater to members’ mental health.

“If we know the group does not want to do a game like charades, we will cut that because we know it will stress the introverts out,” Cahoe said. “We will opt for something like coloring or bracelet making.”

Alliance holds a self-care night before finals week each semester to help its members prepare mentally for their exams.

“It’s a factual statement: we’re in Murray, Kentucky, a red city in a red state,” Cahoe said. “That can feel very ostracizing to queer people as a demographic, so having a set space that is dedicated to being safe and comfortable (is what Alliance is about).”

Murray State is one of many universities in the United States with a student chapter of oSTEM, Out in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. This professional development organization supports diversity and cultivates

connections for LGBTQ+ people in STEM fields.

Tea Party is a discussion and support group for transgender and nonbinary students. Every other Wednesday, members gather at the Pride Center to discuss events and experiences pertaining to transgender and non-binary identity, self-discovery and more.

The Pride Center is in N101 in the Oakley Applied Science building. It is open weekdays from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Residential College programs focus on mental health

MacKenzie Rogers

Lifestyle Editor

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Attending college can be overwhelming. With endless assignments and tight deadlines, finding the time to de-stress can be challenging. According to the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment, 76% of college students answered that they experienced moderate or severe psychological distress.

With over three-quarters of students suffering from a variety of mental health-related problems, the need for mental health programming shines through. To fill this need, the residential colleges host programs to help support students and their mental health needs.

One of the residential colleges, Lee Clark Residential College, hosts events like "Pajama Partea," which involves relaxing in pajamas and sipping refreshing beverages, and "Diversity Cupcakes," which offers students the chance to decorate cupcakes and express themselves through them.

Hope Miles, Clark Residential College Council (RCC) president, said her college offers various programs to help students relax and decompress.

"Our programs offer ways for our residents to express themselves, as well as bond and make friendships with other residents in the building," Miles said. "By having these programs, we help engage students with each other and through things they enjoy outside of their school work."

Some residential colleges, like James H. Richmond Residential College and Hart Residential College, focus more on the entertainment aspect of programming.

Richmond recently hosted its end-of-year program, Richmond on the Green, where outside of Carr Hall, Richmond handed out 700 free tacos to the campus community.

Jordyn Harvey, Richmond RCC president, said Richmond has hosted various events throughout the last two semesters.

"Most of our events are entertainment-based, with the goal of bringing people together and helping residents understand that their res college is a community," Harvey said. "We aim to be a present resource and to support students however they may need."

Franklin Residential College has hosted programs partnered with groups like Active Minds and LivWell.

"In this past year, we have focused more on partnering with organizations that promote different areas of well-being that are related to mental health. For example, we have partnered with LivWell, the Women's Center and the Pride Center to talk with residents about the resources that are available in the community for mental, physical, and emotional health," said Franklin RCC president Eleanor Vaughan.

The other residential colleges did not respond to *The News'* inquiries about their mental health programming.

College Mental Health Statistics

- According to a BestColleges.com survey, more than 9 out of 10 college students who face academic challenges said it affects their mental health.
- According to a survey by Fortune.com, 60% of college students reported being diagnosed with a mental health condition by a professional.

MacKenzie Rogers/ *The News*

With various sources proving high rates of mental health complications, it is up to the residential colleges to assist with some of the smaller mental health needs.



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Journey Church hosts mental health series

Caroline Blakeman
 Assistant News Editor
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Journey Church began a mental health series Sunday, April 7, focusing on the reality of mental health challenges within the church environment and how Jesus' teachings can assist people navigating them.

Matt Johnson, pastor of Journey, said one in five adults and one in three young adults face some form of mental health challenges.

"We've personally experienced how Jesus makes life better and makes us better at life, so we want to make it simple for people to apply his teachings to their life challenges," Johnson said.

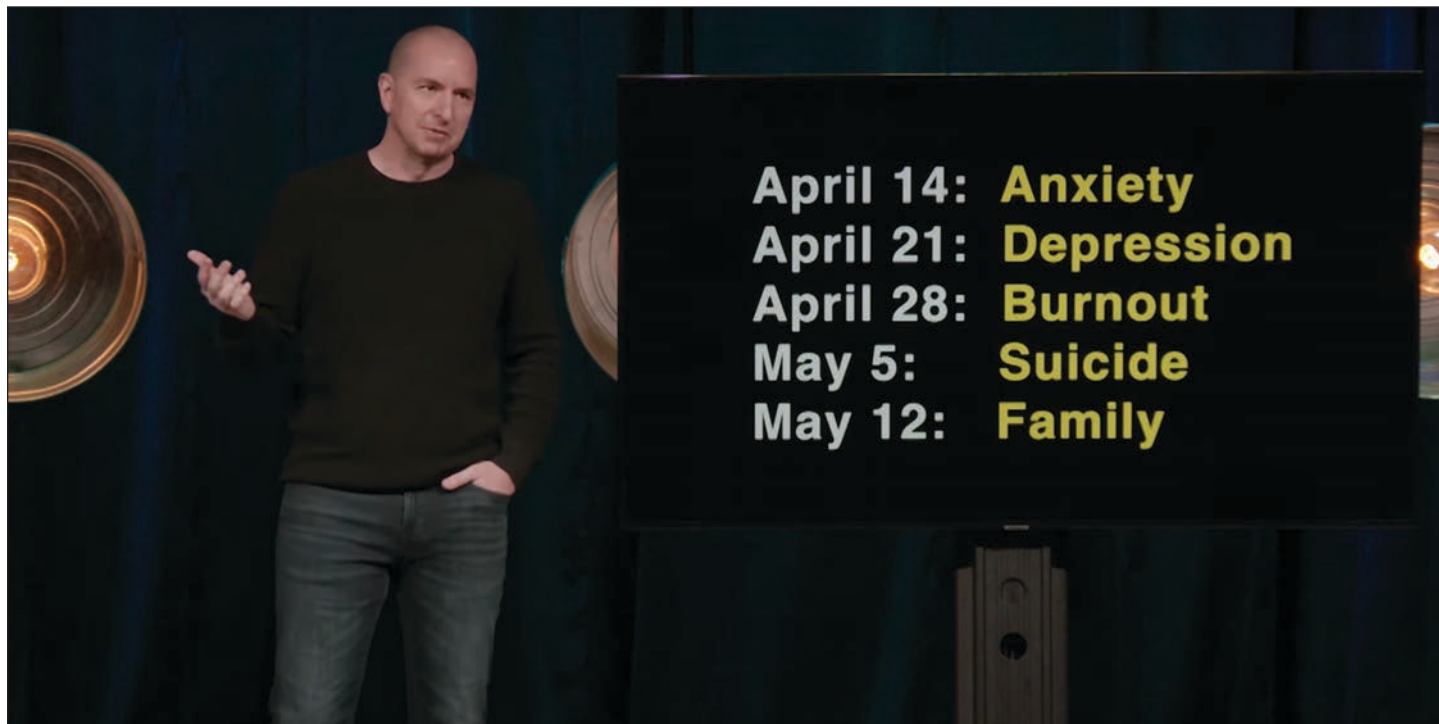
Before beginning the series, Johnson reached out to local mental health professionals for a review of his teaching notes, ensuring his content was accurate and helpful. He said Journey is presenting the series with the endorsement of those professionals.

The six-week series began this past Sunday and will conclude on May 12. The first sermon was an introductory message.

Johnson said the following weeks will include topics of anxiety, depression, burnout, suicide and supporting family members who struggle with mental health challenges.

Johnson said the desire for Journey is to be a safe place for people to share their struggles and emphasized the importance of talking about the issues rather than hiding them from others.

"Not talking about it is not working, so our goal is to create a healthy conversation that allows people to find the support, hope and encouragement they need," he said. "People need to know God is with them and cares for them in their mental health struggles."



Matt Johnson, pastor of Journey Church, launched a sermons eeries on mental health last weekend.

Matt Johnson/Journey Church YouTube Channel

“

Not talking about it is not working, so our goal is to create a healthy coversation that allows people to find the support, hope and encouragement that they need.

-Matt Johnson

”

Johnson said people also should know there is a community around them who desires to support and carry the burden of mental health challenges with them.

Concerning the stigma around mental health challenges in a Christian environment, Johnson said the Bible is filled with people who love God and also face mental health issues. He said the series will highlight some of those people.

"The stigmas some Christians have created around mental health are harmful and do not reflect the teachings of Jesus or the experiences of people in Scripture," he said. "We hope to debunk those in this series."

Johnson said underplaying or "over-spiritualizing" mental health challenges is harmful to people. He said there are necessary solutions that go beyond more prayer or Scripture-reading.

"We're encouraging people facing mental health issues to see a doctor (or) counselor, share their struggles with someone they trust and talk honestly with God about their struggles," he said.

Johnson said Journey is also teaching people how to best support others who struggle with mental health issues.

The series will continue to be held Sundays at 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. at the FOR Center located at 2314 Brinn Road. Both the in-person messages and shorter versions can be found on the Journey YouTube page or at www.journeyalloway.com

Johnson said people seeking help with mental health can contact Journey Church or find multiple mental health resources at www.journeyalloway.com/resources.



Congratulations

Bri Hunter

Editor-in-chief 2024-25



A Glimpse at Mental Health Resources

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Student athletes battle through mental illness

Jakob Milani

Co-Editor in Chief/Sports Editor
jmilani@murraystate.edu

Mental health is an important factor in everyone's everyday life. But for those who are juggling many different jobs or responsibilities at once, it can be challenging to manage mental health.

Student athletes, for example, have to juggle school, sports and a social life all at one time. According to a study published by the NCAA in December 2023, mental health problems for student athletes have "generally improved" since 2020, but are still at high levels.

Lucia Herrero Yanez, a senior sprinter for Murray State's track and field team, said the athletes have little to no time to do a lot of their work, compared to non-athletes.

"Track season is a lot for us right now," Herrero Yanez said. "We're traveling a lot, which means we're missing a lot of classes. It's just hard because we don't have the same amount of time as a normal student."

Lily Fischer, senior infielder for the Murray State softball team, said her busy spring semesters leave her little time for social life outside of softball and school.

"I am an anxious person, which does not help with being a student athlete," Fischer said. "The stress definitely builds up when we are in season because we are constantly missing class, having to reschedule tests, meeting with professors and advisors to try and not fall behind. I also always want to be my best self, perform my best and succeed for myself. When that is lacking, it is easy to fall into a spiral mentally."

Overall, across the 23,272 student athletes (14,001 men, 9,271 women) that participated in the NCAA's survey, 17% of men said they felt overwhelmed by all that they had to do, and 44% of women shared the same feelings of being overwhelmed.

Those numbers decreased from fall 2021, with the men's percentage dropping by eight points, but numbers still remain high.

The numbers were also high for those who felt that academic worries were a leading force of their mental health. 30% of men and 45% of women agreed that academic worries affected their health negatively.

Herrero Yanez said she agrees with the numbers, as she finds herself dealing with a lot of stress because of the amount of work she has to do.

"Most students, when they are done with classes for the day, they just go home and do their homework," Herrero Yanez said. "For me, we got to practice first, then we won't start homework till around 8 p.m. Normal students might be going to bed or winding down around that time."

Fischer also pointed out that a lack of social life can make things more difficult during the season, as she spends most of her time at the field or doing school work.

"During the spring season it is hard to have a social life due to the schedule we have," Fischer said. "But when we have an off day every week, I know a lot of my teammates take that time to shop, hang out with each other but also take time for themselves. Being a student athlete comes with choices, and you make the choice to lose some of that social life to master our crafts."

For international students, the problems are higher as they aren't able to see their family as often. Herrero Yanez came to Murray State from Spain. She said it's a struggle during track season as she doesn't get to be with her parents during the semester.

"This is my fifth year here, but my first year was really tough," Herrero Yanez said. "I was not used to Murray and my English was not very good. But as I've been here, I've gotten more comfortable and gotten to know people. However, the second semester is the hardest because I don't see my parents until summer. So it's been a long time since I've seen them, and I just can't wait to go home."

Mental health can be difficult to handle, but Fischer said she has found all kinds of tricks to keep herself sane in times of high stress, including listening to music, or playing games with friends on off days.

"Finding time for myself is a huge way I deal with that stress and anxiety," Fischer said. "On the flip side, I also like to keep myself busy, whether that is catching up on school work, going on a walk and listening to music, playing pickleball, and reading. Speaking with others and sharing my thoughts are also helpful because it lets others help me, also a good cry will always do the trick."

Student athletes struggle with mental health everyday, just like every other person. But where normal students have time to catch up on homework or chill out, that time isn't there for the athletes. It's an everlasting battle that players are still trying to master.



Photos by Rebeca Mertins Chiodini/The News

Above: Senior sprinter Lucia Herrero Yanez running a relay during a Murray State home meet.

Below: Senior infielder Lily Fischer makes a throw over to first base for an out.





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Murray State University's newest initiates will be recognized during Scholars Week at an induction ceremony on April 16, 2024.

Congratulations to the new student members of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi at Murray State University!

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Dr. Marcie L. Hinton

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Welcome to *Cris Ferguson*, dean of University Libraries, who transferred membership to Murray State's chapter from another university's chapter!

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For more information about Phi Kappa Phi, contact Dr. Shemberger, mshemberger@murraystate.edu.



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