



# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 7, 2013**

## **National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day**

**Norristown, PA (May 7, 2013)** – Montgomery County is joining more than 1,100 communities across the country in celebrating the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day on May 9 to highlight the importance of positive mental health from birth. This year, the Awareness Day national event in Washington, DC, focuses on youth who have demonstrated resilience after experiencing a traumatic event with the support of a caring adult.

The Montgomery County Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities offers young children and youth with mental health challenges in Montgomery County the services and supports they need to thrive at home, at school, and in the community. Research has shown that more than one in four youth experience a traumatic event by the age of 16. Traumatic events range from a one-time incident such as the death of a loved one to exposure to ongoing experiences such as bullying, child abuse, violence, or economic hardships within families.

"The Montgomery County Department of Behavioral Health and Development Disabilities is a leader in providing mental health support to our children, and I applaud their efforts to bring attention to this important work," said Josh Shapiro, chairman of the Montgomery County Commissioners.

To celebrate Awareness Day locally, Montgomery County Behavioral Health, along with community partners, have collaborated with schools and supporting agencies working with children to promote the message of hope for our youth. Banners proclaiming the message "Hero of Hope" will be hung in 17 Montgomery County School Districts and 8 community organizations.

In addition, students will be asked to sign a “Hero of Hope” pledge to honor their friends that may be struggling with a mental illness. Some 10,000 silicone bracelets that carry the theme, along with the phone number for Children’s Crisis Support, will also be distributed.

Montgomery County Behavioral Health is hosting its own 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day at the Elmwood Park Zoo on June 2, 2013 from 10 a.m. to noon. Festivities include participation from over 25 provider agencies that will offer information on supportive services for youth, raffle prizes, food and activities, and free admission to the zoo to the first 300 people. These events focus attention on the importance of providing comprehensive, community-based mental health supports and services to enhance resilience and nurture social-emotional skills in children and youth from birth.