

October 30, 2014

New Initiative to Focus on Mental Health Among African American Men

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. reaches out to the National Institutes of Health on an initiative to collaborate on an educational outreach initiative to raise awareness about mental health conditions affecting African American men. In 2010, an estimated 45.9 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States had a mental illness in the past year. This represents 20 percent of all adults in this country.¹

Brother, You're On My Mind: Changing the Dialogue about African American Men and Mental Health initiative seeks to raise awareness about bullying and depression affecting African American men, their families, and underserved communities. "This initiative is a signature program of our administration and we look forward to establishing a partnership with the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) and other institutes within the National Institutes of Health to ensure that we have the most current, evidence-based information to assist us in this effort," said Antonio Knox, Grand Basileus of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. "Dr. David Marion, 1st Vice Grand Basileus of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., a Licensed Professional Counselor in two states and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist for the last twenty-two years, will lead this initiative. We are delighted to have his experience and expertise as a member of our national Board", Knox continued.

As part of the initiative, members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. propose to take a pledge to help change the national dialogue in underserved communities about mental illness; become more knowledgeable about mental health; educate other men and their communities about mental health; and partner with other organizations to help reduce the stigma of mental illness. They also will engage in educational awareness programs to disseminate evidence-based public educational materials.

"We are excited to soon join forces with Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. to communicate the importance of seeking help for mental illnesses that affect African American men, and raise awareness that help and treatment are available so no one has to suffer in silence," said Yvonne T. Maddox, Ph.D., Acting Director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

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NIMHD, a component of the NIH, leads scientific research to improve minority health and eliminate health disparities by conducting and supporting research on minority health and health disparities; planning, reviewing, coordinating, and evaluating all minority health and health disparities research at NIH; promoting and supporting the training of a diverse research workforce; translating and disseminating research information; and fostering collaborations and partnerships. For more information about NIMHD and its programs, visit <http://www.nimhd.nih.gov>.

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, The National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2012

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated was founded on November 17, 1911 at Howard University. From the initials of the Greek phrase meaning, “friendship is essential to the soul”, the name Omega Psi Phi was derived. That phrase was selected as the motto. Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance and Uplift were adopted as the Cardinal Principles. Omega Psi Phi was incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia on October 28, 1914. Omega Psi Phi is a unique group of men that encourages high standard, community service and assists in the building of character and leadership development among men. Members of Omega share a common foundation comradeship that lasts for a lifetime. Omega has over 700 chapters throughout the United States, Bermuda, Bahamas, Virgin Islands, Korea, Japan, Liberia, Germany and Kuwait. There are many notable Omega men recognized as leaders in the arts, sciences, academics, athletics, business, civil rights, education, government and various science sectors at the local, national and international levels. Some International Programs of Omega include Scholarship, Social Action, College Endowment Funds and many Health Initiatives.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated

Brother, You 're on My Mind:

Changing the Dialogue about African American Men and Mental Health

The Brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated will take the lead in educating its members and the public about the facts regarding mental health amongst the African-American male population, and to specifically raise awareness that there is help and treatment available so no one has to suffer to silence. It is important that the Brothers of Omega learn the truth about the most common mental health myths while at the same time sharing this information with family, friends and the public. The "Brother, You're on My Mind" (BYOM) Signature Program for this administration will help bring awareness to mental health issues and concerns while celebrating and sharing the good news that mental illness can be treated and managed properly. The four areas of focus will include bullying, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders.

The BYOM Program will have four targeted areas: **Pledge; Learn; Educate; Partner (PLEP)**

- Brothers will take a pledge to help change the minds of the public regarding mental illness
- Brothers will become more knowledgeable about mental health
- Brothers and chapters will help to educate the public and other African-American males about Mental Health
- Brothers and chapters will partner with other organizations to have a collective impact on reducing the stigma of mental health

Pledge and Learn (January-August)

The first two targeted areas will focus internally on Omega Brothers: **Pledge and Learn**

In January, 2015 during the Undergraduate Leadership Summit, this initiative will be announced and more information will be given regarding the BYOM program.

During our District and National meetings, we have requested speakers from the National Institutes of Health to assist us in providing sessions on Mental Health. Additionally, during the District and National meetings, Brothers will be asked to 'take a pledge' to help change the dialogue about African-American men and mental health. Brothers will also be asked to 'take a pledge' to reach out to other Omega Brothers and other African-American males to check on them and to say "Brother, You're on my Mind". A consistent message will be developed for Brothers to say when calling or checking on other Brothers or other African-American males.

Partnering with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and other Organizations (May-August)

The education and partnership areas of the BYOM Initiative will 'kick-off' in May. **May is National Mental Health Awareness Month. The men of Omega Psi Phi and the ladies of Delta Sigma Theta should join together in May to help proclaim "MAY-National Mental Health Awareness Month". (M-NMHAM)**

Activities can include the following:

- Have Mayor/City leader to sign or provide proclamation for M-NMHAM. Can do a press conference
- Omegas/Deltas can host a Mental Health Town Hall Meeting or Summit with local/state chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI).....'Live your Life Well".
- Have a kick-off /launch in May during M-NMHAM. This kick-off can include them partnering with the Deltas to announce their pledge and partnership on Mental Health and for the chapters' announcement of their BYOM program.

Educating other African-American Males and the Community (Summer/ Fall, 2015)

All chapters will begin to host activities to educate the community and other African-American males regarding Mental Health. It is important to note that chapters must bring in the mental health professionals to assist with all of your educational activities.

- Host a Mental Health Professional to come to your chapter meeting to discuss depression, anxiety, or PTSD.
- Host a Community Forum for men regarding mental health-invite mental health professionals to be the guest speakers
- Provide a session on "Bullying" for a group of young males with which you currently work or a group of males in a school or after-school program. (Chapters that have young men as a part of their programs can add bullying as a 'session' during the year.)
- Provide various resource pamphlets brochures to males at Barber shops, etc.
- Place information in church bulletins during Father's Day and can ask pastor to read a statement to the congregation regarding Minority Male Mental Health Awareness Month---July
- Participate in or Coordinate a Health Fair and provide information regarding mental health or host a Mental Health Awareness Fair
- Ask a mental health professional to come to your chapter meetings or discuss with a group of veterans issues related to post-traumatic stress disorders. Omega Military chapters can focus on mental health issues specifically geared toward those who have served our country.

Evaluation of Initiatives/ Awards and Recognition of Chapters

Evaluation/survey instruments will be developed and distributed to chapters to collect data on the success of these activities and programs.

When chapters submit their annual program reports, a chapter from each district will be given an annual "BYOM Program" Award at our National meetings.

Resources

www.nimhd.nih.gov

www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications

