

**Winnebago County Proclamation**  
**National Mental Health Awareness Month, 2013**  
**Office of the Winnebago County Board Chairman**

**WHEREAS**, May has been declared National Mental Health Awareness Month, for the purpose of increasing attention to the fact that tens of millions of Americans live with the burden of a mental health problem, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, bipolar disorder and other related debilitating illnesses that can strain not only the individual affected, but also their families, friends, and colleagues; and

**WHEREAS**, the Winnebago County network of behavioral health services is not as complete as many other communities in Illinois and across the country. Data suggests that less than half of children and adults with diagnosable mental illness receive treatment; and

**WHEREAS**, for many getting help starts with a conversation. Individuals who may be suffering from mental health conditions should talk about it with someone they trust and consult a health care provider; and

**WHEREAS**, it is up to all of us to know the signs of mental health issues and commit to lending a hand to those who are struggling. Too often, shame and stigma leave people feeling like there is no place to turn. It is essential to make sure they know that asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength; and

**WHEREAS**, there must be a greater effort to ensure that everyone having such a need has access to the care necessary to address mental health and substance abuse conditions; and

**WHEREAS**, it is equally important to prevent behavioral health problems before they occur, such interventions can reduce or delay the onset of such conditions, reduce severity of symptoms, and support early treatment leading to improved health outcomes and quality of life; and

**WHEREAS**, the recently appointed Winnebago County Mental Health Advisory Committee and Winnebago County Board recognize that behavioral health problems remain a serious public health concern and call upon all Winnebago County citizens, agencies, organizations, and providers to raise mental health awareness and to continue helping Winnebago County residents live longer and healthier lives through improved availability of behavioral health interventions in this community;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Scott H. Christiansen, Chairman of the Winnebago County Board, hereby proclaim May 2013 as “**Mental Health Awareness Month**” in Winnebago County and urge all residents to observe this month by spreading the message of raising awareness about the availability of such services to all who need it.

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Scott H. Christiansen, Chairman  
Winnebago County Board