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Calvanese Foundation to provide free counseling for Southington residents

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By Jesse Buchanan Record-Journal staff

SOUTHINGTON — A fund established by the Calvanese Foundation intends to educate residents on the need for mental health screening and provide money for psychological or substance abuse services.

Foundation officials say such help could keep someone like Adam Lanza, who killed 26 at Sandy Hook Elementary School, from turning to violence. The Calvanese Foundation Green and White Fund for Behavioral Health is named after the Sandy Hook colors.

Kathryn Reinhard, foundation board secretary and treasurer, said information on the program will be given to school counselors, Community Services leaders and local doctors. The care provided would be short term, she said.

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Reinhard said \$20,000 raised at the 2013 foundation gala was set aside for the program. Some money from last Saturday's gala will be added.

The fund is being administered by the Main Street Community Foundation. Susan Sadecki, community foundation president, said grants will be given to organizations working on mental health issues. That could include campaigns advocating mental health screening or a substance abuse prevention program.

The focus on mental health aligns with findings in a health care needs study done by the community foundation.

"One of the high priorities was mental health and substance abuse services," Sadecki said.

Janet Mellon, Southington Community Services director, said she's considering having a mental health professional run a class for food pantry volunteers on warning signs for psychiatric problems and substance abuse.

"We have to be a little more careful, we need to pay a little more attention," Mellon said.

Family and societal supports that existed in past decades aren't as widespread, Mellon said. That leaves town agencies and nonprofits as the only support for some.

Getting mental health assistance for those without insurance can be difficult, Mellon said, since even signing up can take time. The Green and White Fund could bridge the gap.

"When there's an immediate need, this fund will be there," Mellon said. "It addresses something that maybe wasn't addressed before."

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