

September 30, 2019

2018-2019 Better Newspaper Contest

40. Category X: Mental Health

Assistant Editor Eric Killelea and Reporter Carrie Manner have jointly produced more than 50 articles in less than one year surrounding the ever-evolving topic of mental health for the Hibbing Daily Tribune. It is the first time in the newspaper's history that such a full-fledged effort has been made on this topic, which is of extreme significance in cities across northeastern Minnesota where the suicide rate surpasses the national average and there is a severe shortage of resources in an area that is overwhelmingly rural.

As a newspaper, we have been covering a growing push from various politicians and advocacy groups who are striving to bring desperately needed resources and experts to a place known to residents here as "the Iron Range" and ultimately put an end to the stigma surrounding mental illness.

When reporting on such matters, we have tapped field experts in numerous cities across several counties in the largest geographic landscape in Minnesota to gain a wider lense of understanding on complex issues. We've also sought out county, state and federal data and expert opinions to clarify what we're seeing on the ground and have been translating that into explanatory pieces for our readers. More importantly, perhaps, we've been working with individuals who are living with mental health issues and suicide survivors to show both sides of a widely misunderstood subject.

As a team, we have received copious amounts of positive community feedback — including letters to the editor — plus our subscription numbers have increased and shares online have multiplied. We believe this is due to the variety of voices being featured in daily coverage, including experts in youth mental health, school counselors, EMTs, police and fire chiefs, psychiatrists, psychologists, district judges, probation officers, lawyers and advocates.

We are grateful to report that our articles have stirred open community conversations regarding topics that were once only discussed behind closed doors. We find that more and more people are stepping forward to contact us in collaborative efforts to shed light on mental health issues that affect the lives of our readers and neighbors.

Best regards,
Eric Killelea
Carrie Manner
Hibbing Daily Tribune