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Speaker at forum discusses burnout among responders, health personnel

Katie Nix

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ELYRIA — Mental health professionals from across Lorain County learned how to take care of themselves while meeting with a Canadian trauma specialist at an event Friday.

Françoise Mathieu, co-executive director of Tend, a company dedicated to working with those who have experienced direct or secondary trauma, said she focuses primarily on compassion fatigue, which happens when first responders and those involved with social work feel an erosion of empathy toward the people with whom they work and for whom they care.

"It's important to recognize that a lot of people are affected by traumatic events," she said. "Not just the people they hap-

pen to but the people who see them and have to care for victims after the fact. Developing compassion fatigue is normal, and it's not because you necessarily (are) messed up, but it's all about catching it early."

During her presentation, Mathieu said the heroin epidemic sweeping the area could have a serious effect on first responders and eventual caregivers for those who overdose and are addicted.

Mathieu was able to come to Lorain County thanks to a grant from the Nord Family Foundation and she said while this is only her second trip to Ohio, she feels like the lessons she learned while in Canada still apply.

"I think it's important that people recognize the compassion fatigue in themselves," she

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"We want the people who are our first responders and mental health professionals to be healthy themselves."

**Charlie Neff, executive director,
Lorain County Board of Mental Health**

BURNOUT

From B1

said. "It makes you a good practitioner to know when you're running low and burning out. It's about taking good care of yourself so you can sustain this as a career and admit that you're affected by some of the things you see."

Charlie Neff, executive director of the Lorain County Board of Mental Health, said Mathieu was brought in to talk to local nurses, social workers, child welfare workers and law enforcement officers so they learn to identify the signs for compassion fatigue and burnout and slow it down in the county.

"We want the people who are our first responders and mental health professionals to be healthy themselves," he said. "I know (Mathieu) can

help us to do that because she's very engaging and can take this broad topic and make each person feel like it's applying to them in some way."

Neff said the event was about "taking care of people whose job it is to take care of people."

"It's easier sometimes to admit that these things that you see don't affect you," Mathieu said. "But you can't tell me that seeing crime scene photos, like really bad ones, is something that doesn't bother you because your brain is really just filing that stuff away until it catches up with you."

For more information on Mathieu and Tend, visit www.tendacademy.ca.

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