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Contact: Andrea Paul-Taylor
(513) 354-7197 or 354-7005
apaultaylor@gcbhs.com

GCB Screens PBS Program for Tri-State Leaders

“Minds on The Edge” discusses need for mental health system reforms

CINCINNATI: The message is clear: there must be more education on the issues surrounding mental illness, in our communities and across the country. That was the consensus of a group of 70 leaders from the legislative, for-profit and social service fields who attended the **Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services (GCB)** screening of the PBS program Minds on the Edge: Facing Mental Illness, at the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati on February 4. The screening was supported by the Ohio Coordinating Center for ACT.

The screening was followed by a discussion by **Dr. Tracey Skale**, Chief Medical Officer for GCB, who appeared as an expert panelist on the program, which aired last fall. Dr. Skale talked about her experience on the panel and took questions that dealt with the many issues it addressed.

Minds on the Edge presents hypothetical studies of mental illness to a diverse panel of experts from various fields, including a U.S. Supreme Court justice. It attempts to connect the dots between dilemmas facing individuals and families who are living with mental illness, medical practices that can be obstacles to treatments, and public policies that all too often lead to prison.

State Representative Denise Driehaus said she sees the problem as underexposure of the complex problems relating to mental illness and commended events like the GCB screening. On the subject of jailing the mentally ill, she said “the challenge is to educate and expose those of us in the legislative branch, and to talk our language! Tell us how we can save money and help people at the same time.” **Ozie Davis**, Community Liaison for **Rep. Steve Driehaus**, was energized by the discussion. “I texted the congressman that I just saw an amazing show; we will definitely talk.”

Some commented on the need for more attention from the for-profit sector. **Joe Maas, President of JTM Food Group**, said “I commend the people here for the work that they do, but I feel like it’s preaching to the choir. I wish more could see this program because we need to educate people on the issue [of how the system deals with mental illness]. If we see a person with no arms and no legs, we know how to help them, but we don’t know how to help people with mental illness.”

The audience was particularly moved by Melissa Rowland, who works at the social service agency PLAN of Southwest Ohio, and identified herself as a stable mental health consumer. Rowland described struggling with the complexities of seeking mental health treatment. “I had to wait three months [for treatment],” Rowland said. “I thought, do I have to cut myself or attempt suicide to get treatment?” She said she is not afraid to identify herself as a mental health consumer; it gives her perspective to do her job that one can’t learn from a book.