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**OP-ED: NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH CELEBRATES CONNECTIONS
We Must Help Others from all Walks of Life Know that Help is Available**

Too often, individuals who experience a mental or substance use disorder feel isolated and alone. Yet, every year, millions of Americans experience these conditions.

September marks the 31st annual “National Recovery Month,” a period in which families and communities can find hope and spread the message that recovery works. This year’s theme of “Celebrating Connections” promotes awareness that families and communities are an important part of providing the support and services needed to help those recovering from mental health and substance use disorders.

It is fitting that the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is choosing this time to launch its new “Network of Care Service Directory.” This comprehensive directory of services will help Oklahomans quickly identify local programs and resources, and make informed choices about what they need to achieve recovery. To access real-time resources and programs near you, go to www.oklahoma.networkofcare.org/mh.

Mental and substance use disorders affect people of all ethnicities, ages, genders, geographic regions, and socioeconomic levels. Individuals struggling with these challenges can get better, both physically and emotionally, with the support of a welcoming community. We all need to help others from all walks of life know that help is available.

The “Network of Care Service Directory” is just one of many resources available to help Oklahomans in need find services that work. There is free, confidential assistance available 24 hours a day for people in distress or their loved-ones by calling 1-800-273-8255. Links to services related to COVID or every day struggles can be found by calling the Reachout Hotline at 800-522-9054, or simply by dialing 211. You can call any of the statewide network of community mental health centers, visit with your primary care physician or talk to local faith leaders. All are ways to start the process of seeking wellness.

Thousands of Oklahomans access these needed services every year. As a result, they are able to return to work, their families, and turn their lives around for the better.

All of us can play a role by knowing about these resources, and offering support to those experiencing mental and substance use disorders. By doing so, we can make a difference. Together we can help others realize the promise of recovery.

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