



## Board of Chosen Freeholders

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: September 8, 2017

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## Hunterdon County Stigma Free Campaign Champions Dignity and Respect

The Hunterdon County Mental Health Board's Stigma Free Task Force is engaged in a Stigma Free Zone educational campaign with businesses throughout the County, to raise community awareness and acceptance of the challenges faced by individuals dealing with mental health issues.

The Stigma-Free campaign is a national effort that promotes acceptance and confronts stereotypes, so that those who struggle with mental health challenges will seek help and not suffer in silence. The campaign recognizes there is no shame in identifying the illness and asking for help and that people can and do recover and go to live successful lives.

"Mental illness is no different from any other illness except for how society treats the afflicted. During my Major Depressive Episode, I experienced firsthand the societal stigma against mental health. The Stigma Free campaign and our participating businesses are to be commended for working to change this dynamic," Freeholder Rob Walton stated.

As part of the Hunterdon County campaign, volunteers from the Task Force are asking local businesses to display a Stigma-Free Zone decal in the window of their establishments, to stress that the business treats all individuals with respect and dignity regardless of any disability.

Businesses are also asked to distribute the Stigma-Free pledge card to patrons, to help educate the community with regard to mental health issues. The pledge states:

- that the establishment will treat all who enter with dignity and respect,
- will help build a society where people are free of stigma and can get the help they need, and
- will use words and actions that help shift the social barriers for those living with mental health conditions and encourage acceptance and understanding.

More information is available on the Stigma-free Zone and the Hunterdon County Mental Health Board at <http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/humanservices/MentalHealth/index.html> or by calling Hunterdon County Human Services at 908 788-1253.

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