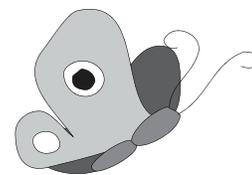


# Helping a Community Cope



## The Acadia Hospital Helps Stockton Springs Elementary Heal



*Pictured is the Acadia Hospital staff that lent a hand: (in front) Jennifer Holwegger, Carla Bommarito; (back row) Dan Johnson, Josh Jones, and Rick Redmond*

On Friday, October 31, students and adults in Stockton Springs experienced a real-life scare when an armed man entered the elementary school and held a small group of students hostage. Thankfully, the armed standoff ended peacefully, but the emotional trauma experienced by the entire community was significant. That day, Paul Caron, Stockton Springs resident and employee of Acadia Hospital, heard of the incident and communicated the situation to Acadia officials. Because the hospital has worked with the Searsport School District for years through a program called Challenge Day, a phone call was made to let school officials know Acadia was prepared to assist.

out of the blue, as this one did, they experience a threat to their sense of well-being, causing a variety of symptoms including loss of concentration, sleeplessness, and ongoing anxiety. A timely, thoughtful response from those outside the immediate crisis helps return people to their previous level of functioning,” says Rick.

Rick Redmond, LCSW, administrator of Admissions and Community Services at the Acadia Hospital, attended a meeting that very same day in Searsport and offered the services of Acadia Hospital’s Critical Incident Stress Management Team. “When adults and children experience a frightening event that comes

That Saturday, he and clinician Dan Johnson spent six hours each helping with further planning and support, including a debriefing session done by the Searsport school-based crisis team for the fourth and fifth grade classes, and then an informational meeting led by the superintendent and police chief with parents of the school children. Dan and Rick then helped the Searsport crisis team plan for Monday.

When Monday came, Acadia staff was on sight and ready to help where needed. Jen Holwegger, LCPC, and Josh Jones, LCPC-C, went to the elementary school on the student’s first day back since the incident. They spent the whole day there; attended a teacher’s meeting before school, made themselves available to staff, and available to school personnel and students when needed. Also, Carla Bommarito, LCSW, senior clinician of Acadia Hospital Access Services joined them after school for a group debriefing for the staff.

“The Acadia Hospital provided us with tremendous and timely support from a variety of clinical staff members, and they assisted with everything from direct counseling of children, families and staff to working with our crisis intervention team in creating a response plan,” commented Stockton Springs Elementary School Principal Linda Bowe. “Our school and community are very appreciative of the response from Acadia Hospital during what was an extremely difficult time for us.”

Months after, The Stockton Springs community still continues to recover from the memory of the tragedy. Each new day brings signs of joy and comfort for the school and town. For the staff of the Acadia Hospital, they feel fortunate they were able to assist where and when they were needed most, helping a small Maine community in need.

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