Meeting Notes – Jan. 14, 2025

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, in the Fellowship Hall of First Baptist Church of LaFayette. Rotarian Dr. Abby Adams was responsible for the program and invited as her speakers Traci Kantor, Practice Manager East Alabama Psychiatry Services and Dr. Skylar Couch, mental health nurse practitioner.

Dr. Couch shared with club members some mental health statistics, including the fact that Alabama ranks as the third worse state in the nation for mental health. Also, males in Alabama have a four times greater suicide risk than females. Mental health impacts a person's overall health, and it is important to address issues early. One of the most important steps that can be taken is to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. In order to reduce the stigma, the first step is to acknowledge that there is a mental health issue or illness. Second, it is important to talk about mental health and encourage self-care. Third, if mental health is normalized, the person is more likely to seek help and prioritize their mental health. There are economic and societal benefits when the stigma is reduced and treatment is sought.

East Alabama Mental Health, our community's comprehensive mental health system has been rebranded as Integrea. It offers both inpatient and outpatient services. Outpatient psychiatric services are offered at Auburn University and in Opelika. Outpatient psychological services are also available. There is often a waiting list for services. Upon completion of their new facility, they hope to offer a residency program for psychiatric practitioners which will hopefully allow for more providers in our community.

Diane Sherriff