

Forum looks at mental health care in Brown Co. (3.14.07)

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Forum looks at mental health care in Brown Co.
Gaps in coverage exist, experts say

By Paul Brinkmann, Green Bay Press-Gazette

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Brown County's health care system for mentally ill people has some big gaps, according to a panel of local experts and community members who gathered Tuesday night in a public forum.

Several panelists and members of the audience, including a Green Bay police officer, told stories of mentally ill people being arrested for behavior that could have been curbed by treatment and medication.

"There are some big negatives, but there are also a lot of good things," said Mary Hammer of Professional Guardianships of Green Bay.

The local social justice group JOSHUA, which has made mental health a top priority, sponsored the forum — "Falling Through the Cracks: What is happening with mental health issues in Brown County?" — at First United Methodist Church, 501 Howe St., Green Bay.

The nature of care for mentally ill people has changed in Green Bay in recent years. Scores of people have been discharged from institutions in favor of community settings.

Several people in the audience said they were inspired to push harder for health care reforms.