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May = Mental Health Awareness Month

District administration knew going into a third year of COVID mitigation would require more tools to help rebuild. “We made a swift decision to increase our counseling staff to better serve our community during this difficult time,” stated Superintendent Berman. And, it doesn’t stop there. In addition to full time counselors, there will be a brand new Wellness Center in August.

Mill Valley students are incredibly lucky to have individual school counselors in every elementary school, and one for each grade level at Mill Valley Middle School, bringing our ratio of student to counselor to 300:1, which is far below the Californian average of 527:1.

As professionals in the field of mental health, our counseling team shared that Mental Health Awareness month is a strong way to open-up to honest conversations about things that we all struggle with, and to bring awareness to things that should not be hidden in dark corners. Current 8th grade Counselor Randi Josephson said, “With national statistics rising around how many people, particularly teens, are struggling with mental health issues, it is important to continue to get the word out that it is ok to say I am not ok,” and Tam Valley Counselor Jason Mountsier added, “All of us need more: more awareness, more relationships with service providers, and more health”.

Our team has an average of 15 years’ experience in the profession, and all have traveled their own path to get here, but the common thread is their love of students: collaborating with them; supporting them; helping them with challenges, large and small; and building connections, and bonds. Jen Ferrer, Enda Maguire counselor commented, “I find it incredibly rewarding when I see students resolving their own conflicts in a healthy way. It has been a pleasure watching our students' social-emotional intelligence grow every year!”

The last few years have been extremely tough for this caring group, who by working together have helped enormous caseloads of students, and staff, through a period of unprecedented stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma. However, when looking at what the future holds for Mill Valley, the team was particularly excited about the supported growth of the services available, and the prospect of a MV Wellness Center for our student population. 6th Grade Counselor Erin Sheedy shared, “I am looking forward to the new Wellness Center! Having students, staff, parents, and the community, work together with the common goal of improving the mental health of all our students is so powerful, and I cannot wait to see all the wonderful opportunities that come out of this collaboration.”

Lastly, the team gave some quick tips to keep in mind:

- You can, and you will, do hard things.
- Don’t be afraid of yourself.
- Give yourself some grace when you screw up!
- We are all human and we are all going to make lots of mistakes.
- Put yourself out there and try, even if you think you might stumble or fail.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help.
- You got this!