On May 18, 100 Polk County residents celebrated the launch of a new mental health workforce program at a Mental Health Workforce Kickoff at Corinthian Baptist Church. The $1.8M mental health workforce investment from Polk County’s ARPA funds will go towards up to $20,000 in loan payments for 90 new mental health professionals. To be eligible, therapists must commit to work for 5 years at a Polk County community-based mental health provider, have a masters degree, and student loan debt.

This is positive news for Grand View graduates. Grand View announced the addition of a Master’s in Clinical Mental Health Counseling degree in 2019. The program is designed to prepare students for direct entry into the practice of counseling and counseling-related fields. It is an online program with two weekend residencies and meets the Iowa Board of Behavioral Sciences Examiners licensing requirements as well as the national standards of the Center for Credentialing and Education. Last year, 100% of Grand View students passed the state Clinical Mental Health Counseling licensing exam.

Dr. Cathy Beck-Cross, LMSW, EdD, Associate Professor of Social Work at Grand View, is excited. "We are thrilled for this opportunity for Grand View master's degree graduates entering the workforce to provide mental health services. Polk County, like the rest of Iowa, has a shortage of licensed therapists, especially ones who are bilingual. Many thanks to County officials who moved this initiative forward, and to AMOS for their advocacy in the process."
The event was organized by AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy) and included Polk County Supervisor Matt McCoy, faith and community leaders, mental health providers, and university partners. In 2021, AMOS community leaders began organizing on this issue after the new Polk County children’s crisis mental health services they had secured were delayed in implementation due to worker shortages.

“I love the work we do, and we need to do better to take care of our mental health providers. I appreciate that AMOS saw this need and advocated to allocate resources toward new mental health providers”, said Derly Beacom a recent Master of Social Work graduate of Grand View University and scholarship recipient. “Loans add to the stress that we already carry, and it makes a big difference not to have to worry about them.”

Myke Selha, LISW, MSW, Field Education Director and Associate Professor of Social Work at Grand View, says “We are very proud of our students who were involved in developing and advocating for this opportunity that will have an impact on services across the county.”