When we approached our upcoming event, we did not have a preconceived notion of what we wanted to discuss. So, we posed the question to our listeners by using a web module powered by Hearken to collect them. Nearly 50 topics were suggested, and over 160 people selected the winner in a subsequent voting round. They overwhelmingly chose mental health.

We then did the process again to shape the conversation itself, asking our listeners for specific questions they had on mental health. From that process, two things happened: one is that we did some pre-reporting based on some of the questions we received (here, here and here), and two is that we used those questions to structure the event. The ones that emerged were:

1. How can access to mental health care be improved?
2. What can be done to address the stigma surrounding mental health?
3. What help is available for the long term care for those suffering from mental illness?

Using a large group dialogue method called World Cafe, listeners rotated through tables having quick discussions on each question. WFDD reporters were on hand to synthesize their feedback, and solicit more questions for future follow-up coverage. Three emerged:

1. Why don't we have annual mental health evaluations like we do physicals?
2. What support is here locally for caregivers of those who suffer from mental illness?
3. How difficult is it to access mental health services based on insurance (or lack thereof)?

We put it again to a voting round, and later reported a full feature story on the winning the question:

How difficult is it to access mental health services based on insurance (or lack thereof)?

(Here's the Storify post on the event made by WFDD reporter Paul Garber, who documented the event as it unfolded.)

HEALTH & SAFETY

Carolina Curious: Cutting Down Barriers To Mental Health Care

by Sean Bueter   10:27am Sep 25, 2017

Ulli Becker tunes her ukulele. Becker took up the instrument for fun, though she admits she needs a little practice. DAVID FORD/WFDD