

Medina weekly news

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Submitted

Alternative Paths, in coordination with the Suicide Prevention Coalition, will once again hold a "Step Up to Prevent Suicide Community Walk" at 1 p.m. on Oct. 17 at Medina Public Square.

Statewide plan aims to reduce suicide, stigma of seeking help

By Lorraine Sipos

In support of Suicide Prevention Month, last week's article introduced Medina County's LOSS Team, which is providing outreach to suicide survivors. This week we discuss statistics, warning signs and services in Medina County designed to prevent suicide.

Five people in Ohio will take their own lives today. Men between the ages of 45-64 are statistically four times more likely to be among that group. The highest rate is for men 75 and older. One youth between the ages of 10-24 will die by suicide every 33 hours, and it is four times more likely it will be a male.

Those startling statistics come from The Suicide Prevention Plan for Ohio 2020-22, which also reported that

suicide deaths increased by 45 percent among all Ohioans from 2007-18. Medina was reported in the third-highest category for counties, with an age-adjusted rate of 14.3-15.6 per 100,000 residents.

Preliminary data from a subsequent report, published by the Ohio Department of Health, showed a 10 percent decrease in suicides between January through August 2020 compared to that period in 2018. That raised hopes that prevention efforts were working.

However, Phillip Titterington, executive director of the Medina County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health (ADAMH) Board said, "The data hasn't come out yet to see what the direct impact from COVID has had on suicides. We can assume

that the numbers will be higher because mental health needs and calls to our Medina County's Crisis Hotline have increased."

The Suicide Prevention Plan for Ohio set goals to reduce stigma, increase knowledge, enhance health care's role in prevention, and mobilize community efforts to prevent suicide. Special efforts are being targeted at youth ages 10-24, males ages 25-64 and veterans and military members. These groups, along with men in the Appalachian counties in southern Ohio, have the highest numbers of suicide. Firearms, suffocation by hanging and drug overdoses are the leading suicide mechanisms, in that order.

When asked why he thinks men over 45 have the highest numbers of suicides,

Titterington said: "Your typical middle-aged man is very proud. He may be going through economic or job-related issues, and he is less likely to seek mental health services."

The Suicide Prevention Coalition has targeted this group with billboards throughout the community with a message of "Reaching out is a sign of strength." It has targeted messages at gun ranges with gun cloths which say, "Set your sights on mental health." They distributed restroom posters and bar coasters with the message, "Don't be silent. You are not alone. Talk to someone," and masks that say, "Life is tough, so are you!"

In 2019, the ADAMH
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Board partnered with Kent State University to put mental health first aid in each of Medina County school districts. Teachers, administrators and staff members were trained in in ways to provide assistance to students.

Hope Squads, a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program, also was set up in the schools. Hope Squad members are nominated by their classmates as trustworthy peers and are trained by advisors. They are certified and trained as QPR gatekeepers. QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer. It provides students with simple steps to reach out to struggling peers and refer them to trusted adults.

The Suicide Prevention Coalition also distributed notebooks in schools with positive messages such as, "Your mental health is a priority. Your happiness is essential. Your self-care is a necessity."

Mental health services have been shown to prevent suicide. Those who are receiving services feel more connected and can be monitored for warning signs. Coalition groups such as Alternative Paths, Inc. work to also engage family members and help educate them on suicide warning signs.

Alternative Paths, in coordination with the Suicide Prevention Coalition, will once again hold a "Step Up to Prevent Suicide Community Walk" on Oct. 17 at Medina Public Square. Suicide prevention materials will be available. The 1-mile route begins at 1 p.m., with registration at noon. A free T-shirt will be provided for the first 300 people to register online at: www.alternativepaths.org under "Events" Donations can also be made online.

For more information about suicide prevention contact Alternative Paths at 330-725-9195. This is also the phone number for their 24/7 Crisis & Behavioral Health Helpline.

**STEP UP TO
PREVENT
SUICIDE**

COMMUNITY WALK

**MEDINA PUBLIC
SQUARE**

OCTOBER 17, 2021
REGISTRATION: 12PM
EVENT BEGINS: 1PM

1 MILE ROUTE

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDED
FOR THOSE UNABLE TO WALK

REGISTER OR DONATE ONLINE:
WWW.ALTERNATIVEPATHS.ORG
UNDER "EVENTS"

FREE T-SHIRT FOR THE
FIRST 300 WHO REGISTER

