

Suicide Awareness Council asking for local support in 20th year in community

Written By JULIA LLOYD

2019 marks the Suicide Awareness Council of Wellington Dufferin's (SCWD) 20th anniversary, but this year has been the toughest one yet.

"Our goal is to help the communities in the area to get more comfortable about talking about suicide," said Heather Glenister, coordinator for SCWD.

It is estimated that 12 people will die by suicide today and every day in Canada.

The council is made up entirely of volunteers and Glenister, who joined the council five years ago and holds the only paid position. The council meets every other month in Fergus at Wellington-Dufferin public health. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on September 19.

The goal is to have as many volunteers on the council as possible in order to spread awareness and normalize the conversation surrounding suicide.

"Unfortunately, in the last 18 to 20 months, there has been an increase of suicide in Wellington Dufferin," said Glenister. "For us, it is about how we can help the community and support them in a way that is practical yet gives them the ability to help one another."

One of the things the council has done to help the community with the increase of suicide numbers was introducing a new grief and trauma suicide workshop.

The workshop was held last April and was open to the public, no charge. One of the issues discussed at the workshop was how one can support a person who has lost someone to suicide in a caring compassionate manner.

One of the greatest difficulties with suicide is that it is so different for every individual; there is no single cause that can be pinpointed as the reason for the increase, Glenister explained.

The other thing they did in the spring was they had a professional workshop for people who worked with seniors with mental health and addiction.

The council has started focusing more on seniors and hired a playwright to meet with 15 seniors who had lost someone to suicide, or maybe themselves survived a suicide attempt. The playwright weaved them into a play called "AfterWhys" and they are on tour now and will be playing in Orangeville in September at the Montgomery Village seniors facility.

Glenister recommends more people take on the training program the council offers which is called safeTALK.

Safetalk is a half-day alertness-training workshop that prepares anyone over the age of 15, regardless of prior experience or training, to become a suicide alert helper. It has been proven that many people who have thoughts of suicide do not truly want to die but can't see a solution through the pain to stay alive.

On September 10 the whole world will be celebrating World Suicide Day. The SCWD invites the community to get active on social media and initiate conversations or attend an event.

If you want to learn more about how to prevent suicide, check out www.sacwd.ca.

?We are about getting the community to talk to each other,? said Glenister.