

Suicide Loss Day assists those left behind

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, it is estimated that nearly 4,000 people die by suicide in Canada each year. About 600 of those deaths happen in Ontario.

For every death by suicide it is estimated that between six and 10 other individuals are profoundly impacted by the event.

However, statistics cannot measure the effect a suicide leaves on family, friends, neighbours, co-workers and sometimes entire communities.

To recognize the impact on those left behind, International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day will take place around the world this Saturday, November 23.

This day is set aside to acknowledge all who have been impacted by suicide loss. It is intended to be a collective day of shared experiences and stories.

The day creates opportunities for dialogue between survivors. Talking about suicide in a compassionate manner will help destigmatize the event and break down the myths that surround it.

‘It’s important to give a voice to the stories and experiences of the survivors of suicide loss,’ said Heather Glenister, Council Coordinator at the Suicide Awareness Council of Wellington-Dufferin. ‘Along with the profound sorrow, there are messages of hope and resilience too.’

Ms. Glenister said Suicide Loss Day has not received a lot of recognition across the country and they are trying to change this. Much of the reason it is not widely recognized is the stigma attached to suicide.

‘We are trying to raise awareness of the impact on families and friends,’ Ms. Glenister said. ‘As well, we are trying to raise awareness of the impact it has on someone who has attempted suicide. Quite often we forget about the person who has attempted suicide and how they are feeling about the journey they have been on. The Council has always done a media campaign about this day. We do Facebook and Twitter that we would like people to share across the region, the province, and across the country. We need to get it out there – it’s important for us to realize the impact that suicide has on people and that they are not alone.’

The Suicide Awareness Council is a group of community-minded individuals and organization that strives to create dialogue.

‘The best way to prevent suicide is to talk about it,’ Ms. Glenister said. ‘There has been a study that says anywhere between 10 to 12 people, and I think that may be an understatement, are affected by a suicide. The big thing in rural communities is people know everybody so the impact is much larger. It goes to the very core of the community.’

The best way to prevent suicide, Ms. Glenister said, is to talk about it. Many people find the subject of suicide to be uncomfortable.

‘Talking is the biggest thing. Talking about suicide is the biggest prevention. As a society, suicide is still a dirty word and people don’t want to talk about it. People don’t want to think about that because it comes from a dark place. People don’t know how to respond when someone commits suicide. That’s what the Council is all about – to provide those opportunities to talk.’

The Council strives to talk about suicide and suicide prevention and remove some of the myths surrounding this taboo subject.