

Suicide Prevention Candlelight Vigil in Licking County
By Brittany Schumann
Suicide Prevention Coordinator
Mental Health America of Licking County

September is Suicide Prevention month, and internationally, September 7th through 13th is Suicide Prevention week. **Mental Health America of Licking County will be hosting a Suicide Prevention Candlelight Vigil on Tuesday, September 9th on the Square in downtown Newark beginning at 7:45 in the evening and lasting about 45 minutes.** Anyone is welcome to attend. There will be a time for people to share their own experiences, information on suicide, and candles to honor family members, friends, and loved ones who have died by suicide. Anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide is welcome to bring a photograph to honor their memory.

You may not know, but:

- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States. On average, one person dies by suicide every 16 minutes.
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among 15-24-year-olds, and the second leading cause of death on college campuses.
- The elderly make up only 12.4% of the population, but comprise 16% of all suicides.
- Approximately 811,000 Americans attempt suicide each year, and it is estimated that 5 million living Americans have attempted to kill themselves.
- An estimated 5 million Americans are survivors of the suicide of a friend, family member, or loved one.

The good news is that there *is* hope! Suicide can be prevented. Know the warning signs! If someone you know demonstrates signs of suicide, stay with that person. Talk to him or her, and seek professional help immediately. Do not leave your friend or family member alone!

Some warning signs of suicide include:

- Making statements such as "Everyone would be better off without me," or "I can't go on any longer."
- Writing notes or poems about suicide or death.
- Withdrawing from family or friends.
- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Giving away prized possessions

For more warning signs, you can visit www.yellowribbon.org/WarningSigns.html

Suicide is a sensitive subject, and sometimes it is still very difficult to talk about. Candlelight vigils show support for the cause and help members of the community break down the stigmas attached to it. It is very closely (but not always) linked with mental illness, and mental illness still has so many stigmas attached to it. I am asking you, members of the community, to please remember that mental illness is exactly that—an illness. You wouldn't blame someone for having heart disease or leukemia. It can't be avoided, but it *can* be treated.

Come show your support at the Square in downtown Newark on September 9. Support your friends and neighbors who may have been affected by suicide. For more information or questions about the candlelight vigil, please contact Brittany Schumann, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at Mental Health America of Licking County at 740-788-0340 or bschumann@mhalc.org