September 2013

ACT LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

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Suicide Prevention…we can all do something—together.

"I am not a doctor, but I am a brother to all of those who serve and have served. This is a family matter." —Jeff Bacon

In working with severely wounded and injured veterans, a few things have become obvious to me. First, it is healing when veterans get together. They understand each other. They often share similar values and even when they don't, they trust each other. In many cases veterans come home and return to communities that do not understand them. Veterans, however, understand other veterans. Togetherness is important.

Second, as Admiral Mike Mullen – champion of veteran issues during and after his tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – has said many times, the Veterans Administration and Department of Defense simply cannot provide sufficient support to the millions of veterans throughout the country on their own. Communities, nonprofits, and other veterans must work together if we are ever going to put a dent in the alarming suicide rates. All of us – you and me – must wrap ourselves around those who served and be there to help each other heal.

Isolation has been linked to suicide. It may not be the cause—rarely is there a single "cause" for suicide—but it has been identified as a contributing risk. Those of us who are not psychiatrists may feel helpless when it comes to treating someone who is contemplating taking his or her own life, but we can all get involved by just being there. Treatment is not our role, but we can visit, or call, or even tap out a quick text message to show that we care. We can make it known that he or she does not have to face life's struggles alone. All veterans must navigate through their own challenges; but they do not have to travel by themselves.

This is hard. It takes real commitment, not just slogans or national awareness campaigns. It requires us to get our hands dirty, to concentrate on individuals rather than demographic groups. At the risk of sounding dramatic, it takes love for one another. This will not be solved by research. It will be solved by veterans helping veterans, Sailors helping Sailors, one at a time, walking shoulder-to-shoulder with them as they struggle to sort through life's obstacles.
If we do that, I honestly believe we can save lives, and that is something veterans – even those of us without a Ph.D. – know how to do.

Click here to view this post on www.NavyNavStress.com and share it online.

Rear Adm. Sean Buck speaks about Suicide Prevention as an all hands evolution.

"As a community—a Navy family—we must come together to support each other through rough seas."

More Suicide Prevention Month News

He Didn't Say Goodbye All Hands Magazine

MCPON's 2013 Suicide Prevention Month Public Service Announcement US Navy YouTube

September: Navy Suicide Prevention Month Navy Live

Suicide Prevention: A Mission for All Navy.mil

A Message from the Navy Surgeon General Navy Live

Life Counts! Ask Care Treat

LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

LifeLink Spotlight

Fleet involvement for Suicide Prevention Month (more here)

This month's LifeLink Spotlight recognizes just a *few* of the numerous command and regional events held so far supporting "Thrive in Your Community," promoting solidarity and resilience. BZ and keep up the great work!

Naval Support Activity Mid-South Commanding Officer, Capt. Douglas H. Walker, signed a Suicide Prevention Month proclamation on Sept. 5, 2013. A brief "Thrive in Your Community" awareness walk followed. A Suicide Prevention Month Luncheon is also being held aboard the installation with proceeds benefiting the Millington Crisis Center, extending efforts to the local community.

US Fleet Forces Command has connected with the Hampton Roads community, participating in the area's Out of the Darkness Walk for Suicide Prevention. Over 20 Navy teams volunteered, including one "Thrive in Your Community" team.

Commander Navy Region Southeast, Rear Adm. R. L. Williamson signed a regional Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Proclamation on Sept. 5, 2013. The proclamation kicked-off Thrive in Your Community events around the region.

Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay is promoting comprehensive wellness through community engagement. Stress and Wellness events and giveaways have been taking place throughout the month, focusing on outreach and awareness.

Navy Warfare Development Command is holding a Suicide Prevention and Awareness run on Sept. 27, 2013. Non-runners can sponsor participants, receiving awareness materials and agreeing to update their crisis wallet card in exchange for their sponsorship. An award will be presented to the participant with the most sponsors.

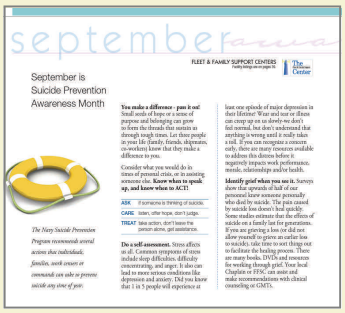
Want to see your Suicide Prevention Month efforts highlighted in LifeLink and on our online sites? Email details of your event to caroline.miles.ctr@navy.mil. Be sure to include released photos, if available, and contact information.

Resilience Corner

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

This article appears in the September-October issue of Wave~Winds Magazine, produced by Navy Region Southwest, San Diego Community Support Programs.

The Navy Suicide Prevention Program recommends several actions that individuals, families, work centers or commands can take to prevent suicide at any time of year.



- **You make a difference—pass it on!** Small seeds of hope or a sense of purpose and belonging can grow to form the threads that sustain us through tough times. Let three people in your life (family, friends, shipmates, co-workers) know that they make a difference to you.
- Consider what you would do in times of personal crisis or in assisting someone else. **Know when to speak up, and when to ACT!**

  Ask if someone is thinking of suicide.
  Care, listen, offer hope, don't judge.
  Treat, take action, don't leave the person alone, get assistance.
- **Do a self-assessment.** Stress affects us all. Common symptoms of stress include sleep difficulties, difficulty concentrating, and anger. It also can lead to more serious conditions like depression and anxiety. Did you know that 1 in 5 people will experience at least one episode of major depression in their lifetime? Wear and tear or illness can creep up on us slowly—we don't feel normal, but don't understand anything is wrong until it really takes a toll. If you can recognize a concern early, there are many resources available to address this distress before it negatively impacts work performance, morale, relationships and/or health.
- **Identify grief when you see it.** Surveys show that upwards of half of our personnel knew someone personally who died by suicide. The pain caused by suicide loss doesn't heal quickly. Some studies estimate that the effects of suicide on a family last for generations. If you are grieving a loss (or did not allow yourself to grieve an earlier loss to suicide), take time to sort things out to facilitate the healing process. There are many books, DVDs and resources for working through grief. Your local Chaplain or FFSC can assists and make recommendations with clinical counseling or GMTs.

The OPNAV N171 team thanks FFSC Pt. Loma for featuring content from the Seven Everyday Ways to Promote Suicide Prevention Awareness in support of Navy Region Southwest's Suicide Prevention Month efforts.

Life Counts! Ask Care Treat

LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Events

SPC Basic Training Webinar
Oct. 9
Oct. 24

Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center Mental Health Month
October

Domestic Violence Awareness Month
October

US Navy's 238th Birthday
Oct. 13

Contact Navy Suicide Prevention
Email Us | Suicide Prevention
Follow Operational Stress Control Online...

We want to follow you too! Have a social media page? Send us a message!

When Your Community Becomes Your Family

By Elizabeth Winters

During deployment, it's easy to get bogged down in our own looming sadness and the promise of months of loneliness. For me the one thing that combats these feelings is being with others. Surprising for an introvert who is uncomfortable in social situations! During family day, before deployment, seeing all of the families gathered made the coming separation seem less...mine. Of course, it is mine, and my children's. Our time without my husband is a personal loss. But being with all of those families, the parents, siblings, spouses and children of those serving alongside my husband, was very reassuring. It was a reminder that while we are sad or lonely or busily trying to get through the day, there are hundreds of other families experiencing those very same feelings.

During times of separation, community is essential. So few military families have the luxury of family in close proximity, and yet we need those connections. We need that support. Whether it is a church community or local friends, it is so important to have people who know what you're going through, who can lend a helping hand when needed, who are willing to check on you because they care about your well-being. It is just as useful to feel needed. When given opportunities to care for others, the focus isn't on me. Being plugged into my church community means that I can prepare meals for families in need, I can volunteer to give another parent a much-needed break and I can give others the same love and caring that has been heaped on my family. We are counting down the days until my husband is home. Until then, we are well cared for and looking forward to more opportunities to care for those around us who need it as much as we have. I know we can carry on, doing what needs to be done until our family is whole once more. The community, truly the family that we have built here ensures that we are not just 'getting through this,' we are thriving.

"Elizabeth Winters" is a Navy wife and a stay-at-home mom to three children ages 6 and under. She and her husband, a Surface War Officer, know what it means to build resilience as a family through stressful transitions and exciting changes—they are expecting their fourth child in a few months while he is deployed. When she's not busy home with their three children, she enjoys crocheting, reading and expressing herself through writing. This is Elizabeth's first guest contribution for OPNAV N171. She hopes to offer relatable perspective for families during the many stresses and excitements of Navy life.

More News You Can Use

How to Find Support, Heal After Disasters DCoE Blog

Mid-South Sailors Kicked Off Suicide Prevention Month with Proclamation Signing and Awareness Walk All Hands Update

Feeling Understood Can Counter Stigma Navy Medicine Live

September is National Suicide Prevention Month All Hands Update

Caregiver Operational Stress Control: The Basics Navy Medicine Live

Naval Hospital Bremerton Focus: Suicide Prevention Homeport Northwest

Navy Medicine Chaplain Offers Compassion for Suicide Prevention DCoE Blog

MCPON Thanks Ombudsmen Navy.mil

Military Crisis Line Saves Lives DCMilitary.com

Suicide Risk & Protective Factors Navy Suicide Prevention

It's okay to speak up when you're down. If you or a shipmate are having difficulty with stress, help is always available. Call the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK, Option 1 (text: 838255), or speak with your local Chaplain. Remember, chaplain support is 100% confidential unless you, decide otherwise.

Life Counts! Ask Care Treat