

World Suicide Prevention Day next Wednesday

By Tabitha Wells - Mental health, mental illness and the topic of suicide have been making their way to the forefront of worldwide conversations over recent years.

In 2010, the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO) declared September 10 as World Suicide Prevention Day to help draw more attention to the major and sometimes hidden public health issue of suicide.

This year, World Suicide Prevention Day will be accompanied by the theme 'One World Connected'. The theme aims to connect people with themselves, with others and with their communities, as connection is considered critical to a person's sense of wellbeing and hopefulness.

'Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth aged 15-29,' explained Gloria Campbell, Child and Youth Mental Health Program Manager at Dufferin Child and Family Services (DCAFS).

'83 percent of Canadians do not know that suicide is one of the leading causes of death among youth.'

Ms. Campbell added that because of the work they do at DCAFS, both recognizing and participating in World Suicide Prevention Day is in line with their mission and goals.

'As an agency that provides mental health services to youth, we want to recognize World Suicide Prevention Day and inform the community that resources are available,' she said.

According to statistics posted on the Suicide Awareness Council of Wellington-Dufferin's website, Canadians are seven times more likely to die from suicide than a homicide. They also stated that the WHO estimates that around the world, someone commits suicide every 40 seconds.

Possibly one of the more frightening statistics surrounding suicide is that suicide attempts are estimated to be 40 to 100 times greater than the actual number of deaths by suicide.

In 2004, then-president of the IASP, Brian Mishara was quoted on a radio interview saying that 'more people kill themselves than die in all wars, terrorist acts and interpersonal violence combined.'

Whether that statistic is still true today with the number of ongoing wars, it still highlights the fact that awareness surrounding suicide needs to increase drastically.

In a more recent interview on the same Irish radio station in 2010, it was estimated that the number of people who die by suicide annually is expected to reach 1.5 million per year by 2020.

Next Wednesday, September 10, Dufferin Child and Family Services will be recognizing World Suicide Prevention Day through a tree planting ceremony at their facilities on Riddell Road.

'A tree dedicated to World Suicide Prevention is a symbol of hope, strength and growth,' said Jennifer Moore, Executive Director of DCAFS. 'Everyone who would like to show their support is invited to attend the ceremony.'

DCAFS offers a multitude of programs and services which provide children and youth with mental health, child protection and developmental support services. Programs are available to both children and families in Dufferin County. For more information on the services, you can visit their website at www.dcafs.on.ca or contact them by email at mail@dcafs.on.ca and phone at 519-941-1530.