

NEWS RELEASE

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Events Scheduled in Missoula to Raise Awareness for Suicide Prevention Week

Montana consistently has one of the highest suicide rates in the nation. According to the last year of full statistics, in 2021, Missoula County's average suicide rate was 21.3 suicides per 100,000 people. The average in Montana was 32 per 100,000, while the national average was 14.5 per 100,000.

To raise awareness around suicide prevention, Mayor Jordan Hess and the Missoula Board of County Commissioners signed a joint proclamation recognizing Thursday, Sept. 7, through Thursday, Sept. 14, as Suicide Prevention Week in the county and city.

Missoula Public Health and community partners will also hold more than a dozen events during Suicide Prevention Week providing residents with resources to help prevent suicide, including:

- **Thursday, Sept. 7:** Distributing materials and resources at the PaddleHeads baseball game
- **Saturday, Sept. 9:** Out of Darkness Walk
- **Thursday, Sept. 7 and Tuesday, Sept. 12:** Question, Persuade and Refer Training
- **Wednesday, Sept. 13:** Tabling at UM with materials and resources, inviting students to talk with the Project Tomorrow team
- **Wednesday, Sept. 13:** Lighting Main Hall on the University of Montana campus in the colors of suicide prevention (purple and teal)

A full list of events can be found at projecttomorrowmt.org.

"Through the ongoing efforts of Project Tomorrow Montana, a collaboration led by Missoula Public Health and United Way of Missoula County, we are making progress," said Susan Hay Patrick, chief executive officer of United Way of Missoula County. "While even one suicide is too many, the most recent available data shows total suicides in our county are significantly below the rest of the state."

Project Tomorrow has trained thousands of Missoula County residents in suicide prevention. In 2022, more than 550 people were trained. In addition, Project Tomorrow distributed nearly 600 free gun locks to community members and established a Suicide Prevention Hotline call center in Missoula.

“We were instrumental in securing a national 988 suicide prevention hotline call center in Missoula, which now has one of the highest answer rates in the nation, at almost 97%,” Hay Patrick said. “This is so important, because a high level of help-seeking is a national benchmark of success in preventing suicide.”

Project Tomorrow Montana was founded in 2014 and named in 2016. The initiative was established to prevent suicide deaths and suicide attempts by adopting efforts that promote support, intervention, and recovery. Over the years, the initiative has and continues to educate healthcare professionals, school counselors and community members on how to identify suicide warning signs and implement safe intervention strategies.

Elissa White, suicide prevention coordinator with Missoula Public Health, is available for interviews. You can contact her at ewhite@missoulacounty.us.

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