

# Students bring awareness to suicide prevention

By Rachel McDonald  
editor in chief

Although September has passed, suicide prevention awareness continues to spread throughout the school as students take a stand to break the stigma against those struggling with mental health problems.

Community Church of Greenwood has challenged its youth ministry to make an impact by participating in its Tomorrow Needs You movement, which encourages students to raise awareness about suicide, especially in teens who need to be reminded of their worth in this world.

"The Tomorrow Needs You movement is something that our church started to raise awareness about suicide and to show others that they are loved and cared for even when things are hard. Many people struggle with mental health and suicide, and it is not talked about enough. Showing others that they are loved and cared for can provide a huge impact on their life," sophomore Carter Chatham said.

Students have been passing around bracelets marked with the phrase "Tomorrow Needs You." Inside the bracelets are the numbers for the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The ultimate goal of the bracelets is to give students physical reminders of the importance of their lives.

"I think the Tomorrow Needs You bracelets give little reminders to people each day that they are needed here, and that even if it is tough today, someone wants you here tomorrow, and tomorrow might be better than today," sophomore Joelle Young said.

Students have participated by posting on social media and telling their personal stories regarding mental health and how they cope.

"An impact I have seen in our students' lives is them being able to share things they have struggled with to help others. I have learned that sharing personal experiences with someone struggling helps them know they are not alone. I started sharing my story, and I found that just being there for others struggling and listening to them is something that helped," freshman Cassie Matts said.

Mental illness can be an invisible illness, so it is important to recognize that people need to feel seen and valued. Saving people's lives can be as simple as checking up on them.

"Suicide prevention is important because suicidal thoughts affect more people than you would think. I have seen lots of people talking about the Tomorrow Needs You movement and being more open to the topic of suicide. It is best to just be there and be supportive to those struggling; there does not have to be an automatic fix, but being there through it all definitely helps," senior Brennan Cain said.

Students are taking action by fundraising for mental health awareness. Juniors Ava Smith and Lilli Vaziri worked together to organize a walk fundraiser last Saturday.

"We are also going to keep raising money throughout the school year for mental health awareness and slowly making it more known," Smith said.

Suicide is a steadily rising issue, especially among teens.

"Suicide prevention is important because it is the second leading cause of death for young adults, which is why it is important to show people that they matter in this world. I have learned to be a shoulder to lean on and to be there for students

and to occasionally go out of my way to check up on them," junior Alyssa Hamm said.

Since suicide is sometimes a difficult topic to discuss, actions often speak louder than words.

"I believe this movement makes people not feel so alone with their own mental health problems and brings them hope. I would say the main thing anyone can do is just be supportive and bring awareness. You cannot force somebody to talk about things they do not want to talk about it. You just have to be there as a supportive friend and let them know you genuinely care for them, and let them know they deserve to live," Smith said.

Regardless of the size of the movement, Tomorrow Needs You has immense value.

"Tomorrow Needs You is a great way for people to help out with mental health who need it, and it shows that everyone belongs somewhere. I hope it has helped out people who have not been in the right mindset, and even if it has not helped anyone yet, hopefully, it helps at least one person because if it does that means the bracelets worked. I have seen so many people passing out the bracelets, being there for people, and just being willing to help spread awareness," sophomore Josh Carroll said.

Many people know someone lost to suicide or struggling with suicidal thoughts.

"Suicide prevention is super important because we all either are that person that is suicidal or know that person that is suicidal, and I know that I would be absolutely broken if one of my friends was the next to give their life to suicide. I have learned these past couple months that more than anything people just need to know that someone is there for them, someone loves them, and even that much can save their lives," Young said.

Sometimes behind the happiest smiles are the most broken people.

"I always check up on people. Even if they seem like the happiest person in the world, I check up on them. I make sure people are doing okay; if they are not, I will take every step I need to help them. Helping students with mental health can be as little as asking 'How are you?' constantly to being there for them even when they do not need you. Sometimes by staying in someone's life, it will save them and you do not even know it," Davis said.

Bringing about suicide prevention awareness is imperative to be a year-round matter, as those struggling with mental health do not struggle only during the month of September. By taking action this September and continuing to show support to others, change can be on the horizon.

"We plan to bring suicide prevention past September by continuing to pass out the bracelets and wear them to remind people how loved they are. We plan to continue talking about the seriousness of suicide. I have seen a big impact on students' lives from even students not from Community Church of Greenwood passing them out to their friends and wearing them to even posting on their Instagrams about how much tomorrow needs them," Chatham said.