

[*One conversation can change a life.*]

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

September is Suicide Awareness Month: Know the Signs and the Risk

(Clyde, N.C.) It's a taboo topic; one many of us don't like to even think about. But suicide is a real problem, and every year, it claims the life of 41,000 people. At Haywood Regional Medical center, we want to help. We want to raise awareness of the dangers of mental illness and help erase the stigma. And it starts with talking about the signs and who's at risk.

According to the National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI), the most recognizable signs of suicide are:

- Threats or comments about killing themselves, also known as suicidal ideation; these can begin with seemingly harmless thoughts like, "I wish I wasn't here" but can become more overt and dangerous
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior
- Social withdrawal from friends, family and the community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Talking, writing or thinking about death
- Impulsive or reckless behavior

"We know that roughly 90 percent of individuals who die from suicide have suffered or suffer from some form of mental illness," said Dr. Tiffany Simpson, Psychologist, Haywood Regional Medical Center. "Because of this, we can be proactive and save lives by identifying friends or family members who may be at risk."

While risk factors vary, there are some common traits among individuals who fall victim to suicide. They include:

- A family history of suicide
- Substance abuse; drugs and alcohol can result in mental highs and lows that exacerbate suicidal thoughts
- Intoxication; more than one in three people who die from suicide are found to be currently under the influence
- Access to firearms
- A serious or chronic medical illness
- Gender; although more women than men attempt suicide, men are four times more likely to die by suicide
- A history of trauma or abuse
- Prolonged stress
- Isolation
- Age; people under age 24 or above age 65 are at a higher risk for suicide
- A recent tragedy or loss
- Agitation and sleep deprivation

"Our hope is that anyone struggling with depression or any other form of mental illness knows that it's okay to seek help," said Marc Gerber, RN, Medical Director BHU, Haywood Regional Medical Center, "and we're here whenever they need us."

Haywood Regional Medical Center's Behavioral Health Unit provides a range of mental health support services, including medication management, crisis interventions, clinical intervention, extensive dispositional planning and diagnostic clarification. The unit is supported by psychiatrists, social workers, licensed professional counselors, and community mental health counselors, as well as a team of 6 highly trained nurses and support staff. To learn more about the services provided at Haywood Regional or suicide awareness, visit MyHaywoodRegional.com/savealife or call 800.424.DOCS (3627).

If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call 9-1-1 immediately or the The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).