

The Paper

April 9, 2011

Saving people from suicide

Dear Editor,

It is late at night and I find myself glued to the news and internet once again as I view pictures of the devastation from tsunamis, earthquakes, after-shocks, and political upheaval in the Middle East. The tragedy is overwhelming. My heart goes out to those who have suffered injury and untimely death. As I send prayers and think about how I can participate in relief efforts across the world, I am also reminded of those efforts being made to save lives here in the U.S. and even in my hometown of Goshen.

One of the efforts to save lives is to prevent a death by suicide. As a member of the Elkhart County Suicide Prevention Coalition, I am keenly aware of the number of people who have died by suicide. Since January of 2011, we already have two deaths by suicide. Last year, in 2010, there was a total of fifteen. That is more than one per month. How do we change these numbers?

We can all make an impact by becoming educated about suicide prevention. We can become aware of the signs and symptoms of depression. We can become willing to talk to loved ones, friends, neighbors or co-workers who may have suicidal thoughts and urges. We can learn to pay attention when a loved one or friend makes a passing remark about life is being too hard or thinking it would be easier for everyone if they were not here. Believe me, these passing comments or feelings shared in confidence should always be taken seriously. Be upfront with your loved one that this is a secret you cannot keep.

Lives have been saved when someone has been connected to a counselor, pastor, or close friend when they are severely depressed. Remember that our ability to give hope when all feels hopeless and our assurance that we do really do care - may make the difference, the ultimate difference.

Katharine E. Schrock MSW, LCSW

Elkhart County Suicide Prevention Coalition