

Suicide Awareness Month

Zero Suicide: Making suicide a 'NEVER' event

By **Lisa Rymer**
YourNews Contributor

TREASURE COAST – September is National Suicide Awareness Month and mental health providers across the nation are reaching out to communities to engage in open discourse, providing vital information how to detect the signs of suicide and what to do when they are apparent.

Long considered a taboo subject, the time has come to address the issue of suicide directly — without embarrassment, shame or guilt.

According to the Florida

Department of Health Vital Statistics, suicide is the second-leading cause of death for men and women ages 25 - 34, and the third leading cause of death among youth ages 10 - 24.

That's more than any kind of cancer, diabetes or drownings. And, those numbers may actually be much higher, as many suicides are reported as accidents.

On the Treasure Coast alone, 320 people have died by suicide in the past four years; nine of them were teenagers.

Experts say that suicide is preventable through proper education.

One highly touted approach being practiced by select Florida agencies is called QPR: question if someone is suicidal, persuade that person to get help, and refer him or her to a certified mental health professional.

New Horizons Mental Health, Primary Care and Substance Abuse of Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee Counties is currently the only local mental health agency certified in QPR.

You are invited to learn more about the Zero Suicide Initiative, QPR and more at a series of free educational events being

offered by area mental health providers, such as New Horizons, Suncoast Mental Health, Tykes & Teens and the Mental Health Association throughout the month of September. More activities are planned for October.

Calendar of events:

• **Sept. 9, 8:45 - 11 a.m.**, Heathcote Botanical Gardens: Lisa Pettey, Ashley's Voice Foundation, "A Mother's Journey;" and Melissa Witmeier, Florida Council for Community Mental Health, "Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Workshop"

• **Sept. 9, 8:45 a.m. - noon**, Tradition Town Hall - World Suicide Prevention Day Symposium

• **Sept. 10, 8 a.m.**, Flagler Park, Stuart - "Out of the Darkness" walk.

• **Sept. 10**, World Suicide Prevention Day: noon, moment of silence in memory of lives lost to suicide; 8 p.m. light a candle for the families who have lost loved ones to suicide.

• **Sept. 16, 10 a.m.**, Fort Pierce Library, Melody Lane - Lewis Baker, Peer Specialist, "Lived Experience," and Dr. Deborah

Dreher, New Horizons, "What happened to you?: Healing from life's traumatic events."

• **Sept. 17, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.**, "Treasure Coast Ride to Fight Suicide." Begins at PSL Hospital and ends at Treasure Coast Harley Davidson.

• **Sept. 23, 10 a.m.**, Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens, "Suicide and Teens", Martha Alamo, RN, New Horizons (Spanish and English).

Please RSVP at 772-672-8333 or email lrymer@nhtcinc.org. Visit nhtcinc.org.