

Walk Raises Funds for Suicide Prevention Program

The sixth annual Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN) Save the One Walk on Saturday, Oct. 19, is an opportunity to memorialize those lost to suicide and work to prevent suicide.

“The walk helps increase awareness of what a severe problem suicide is in northern Idaho,” says Catherine Perusse, a mental health therapist in Sandpoint and the SPAN North chairman. “It brings a sense of community and support to those who have lost someone to suicide.”

The walk will start at 10 a.m. at O’Shay’s Restaurant, 313 E. Coeur d’Alene Lake Dr. Registration and check-in are at 9 a.m. Registration and participation in the 3.8-mile walk on the Centennial Trail is free. People who donate at least \$10 with their registration will receive a SPAN North Save the One T-shirt and a grocery bag.

Funds raised from previous memorial walks helped SPAN North bring a renowned suicide prevention expert to northern Idaho the last two years to train mental health professionals. The trainings followed a suicide prevention training program for 3,200 high school students and 1,200 staff in the Coeur d’Alene School District.

The state’s highest suicide rate is in the five northern counties, where 45 suicides in 2011 equaled 21 deaths per 100,000 residents. That’s a decrease from 53 suicides in 2010.

Idaho is consistently among the states with highest suicide rates. In 2010, the most recent year available, Idaho had the sixth highest suicide rate—49 percent higher than the national average.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Idahoans between the ages of 15 and 34.

Funds raised from the sixth annual SPAN North Memorial Walk on Oct. 19 will go toward educational materials and trainings for mental health professionals and gatekeepers. For information on the Memorial Walk or other suicide prevention activities, contact Catherine Perusse at 208-290-6161 or email to spannorth@gmail.com.