

Boca Raton's Promise and Broken Sound Club partnership adds 24 new Mental Health First Aiders to community with more to come

Staff report

Thanks to a new partnership between Boca Raton's Promise and Broken Sound Club, there are 24 newly trained community advocates in Mental Health First Aid.

The first of five Mental Health First Aid sessions was recently held at Broken Sound Club where business owners, nonprofit leaders and community advocates spent the day learning from the international MHFA curriculum developed in Australia in 2001 by nurse Betty Kitchener and her husband.

The training helps people identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders through an interactive eight-hour course.

"As demonstrated in Parkland, each one of us may one day find ourselves in an unexpected role of 'mental health first aider' as a friend, colleague or family member with lives at risk in our neighborhoods, schools, workplace, houses of worship, ballparks or homes and this training will prepare us," said Rita Thrasher, co-founder and executive director of Boca Raton's Promise. "Just as we have globally valued and promoted the critical need for CPR training, our community must now be as passionate to do the same with Mental Health First Aid training. It is critical to the health, welfare and safety of our community. We thank Broken Sound Club for opening its doors to expand this opportunity."

The local training was taught by certified trainers Ed



Frontera and Cindy Wides, two of 24 trainers in Palm Beach County, who since 2014 have collectively trained more than 4,321 through 239 sessions.

The course goes over mental illness and substance use disorders in the U.S. and introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact and overviews common treatments.

Those who take the course learn a five-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources and knowledge to help an individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer, social and self-help care.

The session, hosted by Broken Sound Club at its main clubhouse, was underwritten from proceeds generated by Boca Raton's Promise's recent Artist-in-Residence Weekend featuring nationally recognized vocalist, songwriter, playwright, performer and author Patti Linsky.

Knowing that one in four residents in greater Boca Raton -- approximately 20,000 -- will be impacted by mental illness during their lifetime, the proactive partnership was created as a "call-to-action" in Boca Raton in the aftermath of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School tragedy, following the March for Our Lives rally in Mizner Park Amphitheater.

The "collaborative promise" will continue to drive Boca Raton Federation of Homeowners Associations members, private club communities, schools, youth programs, businesses and city agencies to identify and designate personnel to become MHFA-trained by nationally certified trainers secured by Boca Raton's Promise.

Broken Sound Club will host four additional trainings that will be capped at 30 participants.

The Club is also donating funds toward underwriting the trainings of 17 individuals in "memory and honor" of each life lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas.

To learn more about Boca Raton's Promise and its Mental Health First Aid trainings, visit www.bocaratonspromise.org, email info@bocaratonspromise.org or call 561-866-1850. ■

The Boca Raton Tribune

Your Closest Neighbor

Suicide Prevention Month Focuses Attention on Helping Those in Need

By: Robert S Weinroth, September 2018

Suicide – it's not generally the topic of casual conversation at a social gathering or around the dinner table – that is, unless its impact has been felt close to home!

The fact is, suicide rates continue to rise and suicide affects our nation's active-duty service members and members of the National Guard and Reserve. The VA reports a total of 20.6 suicides every day. Of those, 16.8 were veterans and 3.8 were active-duty service members, guardsmen and reservists. That amounts to 6,132 veterans and 1,387 service members who die by suicide each year.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month with next week being designated, Florida Veteran Suicide Prevention Awareness Week. While suicide prevention is important to address year-round, Suicide Prevention Awareness Month provides a dedicated time to come together with collective passion and strength around a difficult topic.

The truth is, we can all benefit from honest conversations about mental health conditions and suicide, because just one conversation can change a life.

Each of us has a responsibility to address this devastating public health crisis by improving mental health services and awareness of suicide prevention programs.

#BeThe1To is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's message for National Suicide Prevention Month and beyond to help spread the word about actions we can all take to prevent suicide.

The Lifeline network and its partners are working to change the conversation from suicide to suicide prevention, to actions that can promote healing, help and give hope. **Locally, Boca's Raton's Promise, under the leadership of its co-founder and executive director, Rita Thrasher, has been focusing on **Breaking The Silence** and of removing the stigma of mental illness and starting community conversations.**

Thrasher has focused attention on mental health priorities by establishing outreach to cities and County stakeholders. In partnership with Broken Sound Club, Boca Raton's Promise recently held the first of five interactive eight-hour Mental Health First Aid training sessions where participants received training in how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

Since 2014, Ed Frontera and Cindy Wides, two of 24 certified trainers in Palm Beach County, have trained over 4300 people. Thrasher's mission is to work with community leaders to identify and designate additional personnel to become MHFA-trained.

The American Association of Suicidology has published a list of Suicide Warning Signs an easy-to-remember mnemonic: (**IS PATH WARM**):

- Suicidal **ideation**, suicidal thoughts.
- Increased **Substance** (alcohol or drug) **use**
- No reason for living; no sense of **Purpose** in life
- **Anxiety**, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all of the time
- Feeling **Trapped** – like there's no way out
- **Hopelessness**
- **Withdrawal** from friends, family and society
- Rage, uncontrolled **Anger**, seeking revenge
- Acting **Reckless** or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Dramatic **Mood changes**

If you or someone you know might be at risk of suicide, you can find help here in Palm Beach County at the 211 Help Line which can be reached by Calling 2-1-1 or (561) 383-1112 or (866) 882-2991. The 211 Helpline can also be reached by Texting, Online Chat, or by Email. To Text: text your zip code to 898211

The trained specialists at the 211 Crisis Call Center are required to go through an extensive 100-hour training before they take their first call. The 211 Crisis Call Center, located in Lantana, answers an average 300 calls a day.

Historically, when a high-profile person dies by suicide, the “celebrity-suicide effect” often leads to copycat deaths. In the four months after Robin William’s took his life in 2014, there was a 10 percent increase (2,000 additional suicides)!

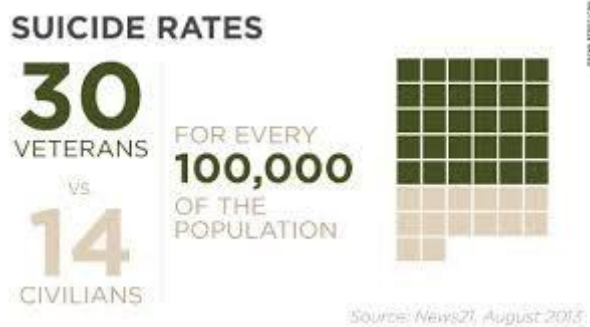
The Suicide Prevention Lifeline gives these suggestions if a friend or loved one is thinking about suicide:

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don’t debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don’t lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don’t dare him or her to do it.
- Don’t act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don’t be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove means, like weapons or pills.
- Get help from people or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

It can be scary when a friend or loved one is thinking about suicide. It’s hard to know how a suicidal crisis feels and how to act.

Call the 211 Helpline or the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.TALK (8255) at any time for help if a friend is struggling.

To learn more about the issue of Veteran suicide as well as VA mental health resources, please visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov, where you’ll find the latest national and state-level research.



Veterans and their loved ones also can visit MakeTheConnection.net



to explore information on mental health issues and hear stories from Veterans who have faced challenges like theirs, including posttraumatic stress disorder, substance use problems, transitioning from service, and more.