

SEPTEMBER 2020 | ISSUE 4

# SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

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*Alleghany Highlands Healthy Youth Coalition*

BE THE **1** TO

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN SUICIDE PREVENTION.

#BeThe1To | #800273TALK

## Coalition Updates

Newsletter written by: Chelsea Dunaway, AHHYC  
Chair

The Alleghany Highlands Healthy Youth Coalition has been revisiting our coalition by-laws and leadership roles during the months of July and August.

We have added more detailed job descriptions for the Chair and Co-Chair position. It was also time to nominate Chair and Co-Chair positions for the next two year cycle.

The Chair of the coalition will continue to be Chelsea Dunaway who is the Prevention Coordinator for the Alleghany Highlands Community Services. The Co-Chair will continue to be Tiffany Bowser who is the Case Management and Prevention Supervisor at the Alleghany Highlands Community Services.

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# Suicide Prevention

Suicide prevention is one of the areas that the Healthy Youth Coalition focuses on. It is important that our community comes together, especially during COVID-19 so that we can create a mentally healthy community.

This year, the theme during the month of September is #Bethel according to the [nationalpreventionlifeline.org](https://www.nationalpreventionlifeline.org). This campaign will aim to teach community members how to reach out to people and ask about their mental health. There are five steps that this campaign focuses on: ask, be there, keep them safe, help them stay connected and follow up.

Now, you may be thinking that this is a lot to put on yourself. The good thing is that the Alleghany Highlands Community Services offers more in depth free trainings for suicide prevention. Also, the point is to be a support for individuals who may be struggling and then refer them to help. The CSB offers a variety of mental health services. For more information on services please call 540-965-2100.

Another part of suicide prevention is spreading a message of hope along with the National Suicide Prevention Hotline and Text Line numbers. Throughout the community during the month of September you have seen yard signs with positive messages along with the Suicide Hotline and Text Line number. This is part of our "Let's Talk, Alleghany" campaign that we started back in June. The signs are also part of a national movement called "Don't Give Up". This movement originated in Oregon by a family who decided to spread positive messages throughout their community for those who are struggling. We hope that you were able to enjoy this movement and we plan to build upon this in the upcoming years. If you or someone who know is struggling, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or text at 741-741. For more local resources please call the Alleghany Highlands Community Services at 540-965-2100.



## Upcoming Events

- 10/15 Healthy Youth Meeting at 11:30 AM
- 10/23-10/31 - Red Ribbon Week



# Don't Give Up Movement

During the month of September, the Alleghany Highlands Healthy Youth Coalition partnered with Live Well Alleghany to bring the national Don't Give Up Movement to the Alleghany Highlands. This movement went along with our "Let's Talk, Alleghany" campaign which has been ongoing since June. The Don't Give Up movement originated in Newberg, Oregon. The story from the family is below.

"May 13th 2017 was a wet Saturday afternoon when my husband, my two young daughters and I filed into our car on a stealth mission in our small town of Newberg, Oregon: Anonymously stake 20 yard signs. The signs said: Don't give up You are worthy of love Your mistakes don't define you A few weeks before, we were hanging out with friends when one of them mentioned the suicide rates in our community and I about fell out of my chair. I felt completely hopeless and ill equipped to be part of a solution. After all, I wasn't a therapist. I didn't know of anyone suffering with thoughts of self-harm. What on earth could I do? But it was clear in my heart, I had to do something. The idea of encouraging yard signs had been bouncing around in my head for years but it was always 'just a silly idea'. That is until May 2017 - then it became the something. When we knocked on strangers' doors asking to place signs in their yard for 2 weeks, they didn't hesitate. Once they saw the signs had no branding, no website, no organization, no strings attached, just a young family trying to spread love and hope, they were all in. Within a few hours of returning home, the community was buzzing about the signs, and when we realized people wanted to purchase signs for their yards, we spoke up and offered to help! My friend Jessica Brittell, a talented graphic designer, designed and printed our first batch for us. And the second batch. And pretty soon I was emailing her in a panic after being flooded with orders. Within a few days, our community ordered over 150 yard signs. I vividly remember that week sitting on the couch feeling totally elated and completely overwhelmed. I looked at my husband and said, "This is big."

Are we all in? Do we want to do this? Because now it's a thing. Do we want a thing?' Without a hesitation, he confirmed: we're all in. That night he built me website. The next day I opened a separate bank account for the movement. Over the next few weeks we added more messages: You matter. You are not alone. One day at a time. It's not too late. We also added smaller cheaper product: wristbands, stickers, encouragement cards - selling everything at-cost...

The movement really picked up traction when family friends road tripped that summer from Portland, OR to Rochester, NY leaving a trail of our product in every public bathroom, restaurant, and rest station across this great country. Their stories of beautiful connection with strangers through our product stirred my heart. Indeed, this was big. Within a year we had news outlets in Dallas, Boston, Cincinnati, and Portland cover our movement. I guess generous love with no strings attached was newsworthy. I guess yard signs were genius. People are using our product in love packages to the homeless, corporate gifts boxes, handouts at family reunions and swim tournaments, and tokens of hope at funeral services. Stickers have been plastered in Manila, Philippines. yard signs posted in Mbabe, Rwanda, and wristbands handed out in Costa Rica and Zambia. Sign rallies are being organized by generous kind souls all around the country. Schools, churches, businesses, neighborhoods, and nonprofits are using our tokens of hope and love to be a voice of support in their communities. And it's all organic. In the Fall of 2018, when we realized the movement wasn't slowing down, we decided to legally become a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our board consists of Jessica Brittell (our original dream enabler) and Evangeline Pattison (the friend I called in a panic in May 2017 "Are we a business? Are we a non-profit? Are we just a movement? WHAT IS THIS!?!") Our product has shipped to all 50 states and made it's way to over 26 countries in several different languages. But the most encouraging and fulfilling part of running this movement are the stories. With permission, below are just a few from the first 3 months. I simply could not keep up with all the stories but this will give you an idea of the impact love and kindness can have. Friends, let's not underestimate the power of simple kind words at the right place at the right time for the right person. Let's not wait for someone more qualified or less broken to spread hope and and love. Life is messy but we're in this together. Amy Wolff"

Please enjoy the signs up around our community and for more information please visit [dontgiveupsigns.com](http://dontgiveupsigns.com)

# Lock and Talk VA

Lock and Talk VA is a suicide prevention initiative throughout Virginia that aims for a person to lock up their guns, their medications and to talk about their mental health problems and seek help.

Lock and Talk VA was founded in 2015 by eight prevention coordinators from Community Services Board in Region 1. The goal was to create a program that could prevent suicide by using evidence based approaches and research.

Lock and Talk VA is a three step approach to suicide prevention. First, aims for the community to lock up their fire arms and medications. Fire arms and medications have been proven to be lethal means of suicide. In order to prevent this lethal means use, we want people to lock them up to prevent people who are struggling with a mental health problem from accessing them. The Alleghany Highlands Community Services gives out free gun locks and medication lock boxes to help with this initiative.

The second part is to educate the community on mental health and to decrease the stigma. The AHCS offers free trainings in suicide prevention. These trainings are: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Youth Mental Health First Aid, and Adult Mental Health First Aid.

Lastly, the Gun Shop Project. This project establishes a partnership between gun retailers and prevention personnel. Gun Shop owners are given the opportunity to show their support for suicide prevention by giving out free gun locks and displaying a Lock and Talk VA poster in their shop.

For more information on this initiative please visit [lockandtalk.org](http://lockandtalk.org) or call the Alleghany Highlands Community Services at 540-965-2100.



## COVID-19 Updates

- Alleghany County: 77 cases
- Covington: 25 cases
- Wash hands, wear face masks, maintain 6 feet of distance