

Kaukauna walk aims to raise suicide awareness

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The path to preventing suicide begins with sharing and keeping an open ear.

It was an issue shrouded in silence not so long ago. There's still a stigma — and it's a tough subject for many to talk about — but far more recognize it is a real issue with real solutions, said Barb Bigalke, executive director of the Center for Suicide Awareness in Kaukauna.

“We have to fight that stigma,” Bigalke said. “We need people to know that if you need help, there's no shame in that.”

On Saturday, the center will create an environment for those conversations through its fifth annual Walk for Suicide Awareness at Kaukauna's Central Park.

The walk has grown in each of its first four years. It's been a healing event for families who have lost loved ones to suicide and has provided them with valuable opportunities to share their stories. It's important for families to know “I'm not alone in this,” Bigalke said.

It also has brought out those who haven't been impacted directly but want to be part of the solution.

The event will begin with an empty chair ceremony remembering the lives of those lost to suicide. It's also an event of celebration — both of departed loved ones and the promise afforded by prevention work. Walkers will enjoy live music. It will include children's activities and raffles.

The event check-in begins at 8 a.m. The ceremony will begin an hour later with the walk starting at 10 a.m.

Those interested in participating can get more information at www.walkforsuicideawareness.org.

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