

Kaukauna holds sixth 5K walk for suicide awareness

by Ben Krumholz
Saturday, September 12th 2015

KAUKAUNA — A spotlight has been shining this week across

the country on suicide, as Thursday marked suicide awareness day.

Today, walks were held across our area, hoping to decrease the country's tenth leading cause of death.

After losing her brother to suicide five years ago, Lynn Stinski made the decision to leave her job to start working at Kaukauna's Center for Suicide Awareness.

"It is a real tragedy to lose someone to suicide and we are here to support them," said Stinski, of Appleton.

Stinski is touched to see the thousands of people who gathered at Hydro Park for the city's sixth annual walk for suicide awareness.

"It really is a blessing because there are so many families every age, every gender, every socio economic level that is touched by suicide and we all get together to really support one another," said Stinski.

In the walk's first year 500 people showed up. Now it's beyond 3,500 participants.

"I don't think it's Kaukauna," said Barb Bigalke, the walk's organizer. "It's everywhere. It's not just one city, one school, one town, it's an epidemic throughout our whole state."

An average of one person commits suicide every 15 minutes in

America. Flags lined the park representing the 680 veterans who took their life in Wisconsin in just the past year.

"Our suicide rates are high and we all have to work together to prevent suicide on a daily basis," said Bigalke.

While walkers were doing their part here, just down the street, motorcycle riders were hoping to send the same message.

"It's been an enigma forever and ever with the general public with talking about it, reaching out and touching another person just contacting them saying it's ok to be a little bit weak and you're not weak just for the sake of it," said Tony Sonnleitner, the ride's organizer.

Leaving from Kaukauna, more than a hundred bikers showed up for the 100 mile ride.

"If we have ten bikes it's all worth it just to bring out the awareness," said Sonnleitner.

"Every life does matter and that's a really strong message we want to send to everyone," said Stinski.

Global speaker Kevin Hines also spoke in Kaukauna after the walk. He is one of 34 people, less than a percent, who survived a suicide attempt jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.