

Police and Center for Suicide Awareness team up this holiday

by Alex Ronallo, FOX 11 News
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LITTLE CHUTE (WLUK) -- For people struggling emotionally, the holiday season can be difficult, but one local police department has teamed up with a suicide resource center to help ease the burden.

It isn't your average traffic stop. Instead of a ticket, the driver went away with a gift bag thanks to 'Operation Lift Your Spirits.'

"To just say, 'we know the holidays are tough and people struggle and here's something that might help you,'" explained Barb Bigalke, the executive director of Center for Suicide Awareness.

The Center for Suicide Awareness awareness in Kaukauna teamed up with the Fox Valley Metro Police Department.

Officers are giving out bags filled with things like toiletries, winter clothes and gift cards.

"They're the ones that see the people that are in need, the people that might be struggling, the people that fall between the

cracks," Bigalke told FOX 11 News.

Officers decide who gets the bags, possibly choosing people they know are struggling and visiting them at home.

"Also on traffic stops. If they encounter someone on a routine traffic stop for, say a tail lamp that's out," explained Officer Michael Lambie.

The bags also hold information about the Center for Suicide Awareness and its statewide texting Hopeline.

"Not that every person we encounter may be suicidal, but we understand that people, at different times, run into points of difficulty in their life," Lambie told us.

And the holidays can be the toughest time.

"We see a dramatic increase in people texting in the Hopeline during the holiday season," said Bigalke.

Bigalke told FOX 11 there has been an 82-percent increase in people texting the Hopeline this holiday season over last year. She told us the holidays can be very stressful, expensive and, yes, depressing,

"Grief really is deeper during the holiday season," said Bigalke.

Bigalke told us she hopes 'Operation Lift Your Spirits' inspires others to be a little kinder.

"In the hustle and bustle of gift giving right now, kindness is absolutely free," she said.

For more information on The Center for Suicide Awareness go [here](#).