

Empty Shoes Memorial at State Capitol shows impact of suicide

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MADISON, Wis. (WBAY-TV) A Kaukauna group that runs Wisconsin's text-HOPELINE took to the state capitol steps with more than a thousand pairs of shoes and boots.



The symbol created by the Center for Suicide Awareness illustrates Wisconsin suicides in 2016.

The center hopes to break the stigma of suicide which can impact families from all walks of life.

"The pair of empty shoes reminds us that these are real people," Lynn Stinski, Center for Suicide Awareness, said. "They live on in our hearts but their voice has been silent because of the tragedy of suicide."

A group in the Fox Valley that helped make the display possible was the Military Veterans Museum in Oshkosh. It loaned around 60 of the 136 boots for the memorial representing how many veterans died by suicide.

"I hope that it helps to educate the people that see the display about the problem of veteran suicide," said Ron Twellman, Military Veterans Museum Vice President.

And it's education that can spark a conversation and lead to more awareness about suicide's reach.

"To train our communities in ways each one of us can reduce and hopefully end eventually suicide," said Stinski.