

A teenager takes their own life around every 100 minutes. This alarming statistics comes from The Center of Discovery which provides support and treatment for teens dealing with eating disorders, substance abuse, or mental health issues. The center also reported that for people between the ages of 15 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death with around 20% of teens facing depression during these years. The number of teens committing suicide has been increasing since the 1990s.

Stark county has been especially affected by this epidemic and it has left the community struggling to find ways to cope and discuss this problem. Many teens find it difficult to talk about their depression or suicidal thoughts as they fear judgment. Parents and adults can also have trouble approaching the topic with their child or student as they feel they might offend them.

In order to help this communication, the North Canton Middle School joined with Carol Vesely, a crisis counselor from at the Crisis Intervention and Recovery Center in Stark County and a member of the Stark County Suicide Prevention Coalition. Vesely came to the North Canton Middle School on February 1st to host an assembly called "Depression in Teens" intended for the students of North Canton City Schools and their parents.

The Stark County Suicide Prevention Coalition is made up of over 20 different local organizations who joined forces to prevent suicide. The coalition was formed in 2003 as a way to inform the community about suicide and mental health issues and to help individuals who show an increased risk for suicide. Their website says they meet once a month to "discuss ways to promote suicide prevention activities, to reduce stigma around suicide and mental illness, and to empower individuals to get involved in saving lives. We coordinate and/or participate in a variety of community activities to promote our goal of reducing suicides in Stark County."

NCMS principle, David Eby believes that parents need to be having conversations with their children about suicide.

"Parents need to be talking to their child about what the stressors are in their life," Eby said. "Those stressors could be academic or social. The important piece is that parents are talking with their child. Many parents believe depression and suicide could never happen with their child. Parents also need to monitor their child's use of social media. Social media, when not monitored, can create an environment that will lead to depression.

The Prevention Coalition gives three steps to help prevent youth suicide. The first step is talking to your friends and family about suicide. Parents should plan what to say before having this difficult conversation and listen to what their child has to say.

The second step is to spread the word that help is available. Eby wants his students to know that there are people out there willing to help.

"The first thing I would recommend is to speak to someone," Eby said. "That person can be a parent, teacher, counselor, or another trusted adult. Stark County also has a great resource with the suicide help line. A student or parent can call 330-452-6000 or text 4hope to 741741."

Eby also wants students to know that there are resources at school and in the community that students can utilize if they need to.

"Students can speak with their school counselor. The counselor can talk with the child and, if risk factors are evident, open up the dialogue with the parent. There are many resources

in Stark County, including the ones listed above. Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery has resources for families in many different circumstances.”

The third step is to understand and notice the warning signs. One reason for the assembly was for students and parents to understand what depression is and what some of the warning signs for suicide are. According to the Prevention Coalition, some of the warning signs include talking or writing about suicide, giving away belongings, feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, and losing interests in activities and hobbies they use to enjoy.

Depression may make someone feel completely helpless and discourage and suicide may feel like the only way out. No matter the situation, suicide is never the answer and there are always people out there who care and want to help.

Crisis Hotline anytime at 330-452-6000

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline anytime at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line Text 4hope to 741 741 anytime