

Yerington's First *Walk in Memory, Walk For Hope* September 11, 2010

Yerington, Nevada's first *Walk in Memory, Walk for Hope* drew about 30 people of all ages. The community walk to bring awareness to suicide prevention and to remember loved ones lost to suicide was organized and hosted by Mason Valley Boys and Girls Club's *Teens Helping the Community (THTC) Keystone Club* with prevention booklets, wrist bands, bags and speakers from *Nevada Coalition for Suicide Prevention* and *Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention*.

The walkers registered, got into their "Communities Connecting to Prevent Suicide" t-shirts, and enjoyed muffins and juice at Veterans Park. Next, Jessica Ramirez of THTC Keystone Club asked the group to observe a moment of silence in memory of lost loved ones, and then the walk to Rocket Park began, with a police escort.

Although the event was a first for Yerington, the Nevada Coalition for Suicide Prevention has been organizing this annual event on September 11 for many years, with new communities joining the Walk each year. This year, Yerington, Douglas County, Hawthorne, Reno, Pyramid Lake, Winnemucca, Elko, and Las Vegas all participated.

Walkers stopped at Rocket Park, where THTC Keystone Club and Yerington High Student Leadership members served a BBQ lunch funded by Yerington Task Force. Featured speaker Misty Allen of the Office of Suicide Prevention thanked the participants, explaining that because Nevada has one of the highest suicide rates in the nation, it is especially important that individuals and diverse groups join hands to create a safety net of community connections and prevention training to reduce suicide risk factors. Allen read a proclamation from Governor Gibbons naming September 5-11 as Suicide Prevention Week, and read a letter of welcome to the walkers from Senator Harry Reid, who has been key in promoting legislation to address suicide prevention and affordable mental health care.

The Yerington Walk was part of an on-going action plan to reduce suicide risk factors in the Lyon County, Nevada area that was formed with Healthy Communities Coalition of Lyon and Storey and its many partners earlier this year. The plan was a result of communication among diverse parts of the community, including law enforcement, education, mental health, employment agencies, senior centers, social services, community task forces, and alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and treatment agencies.

As a result, Lyon County School District, Tribes, Mason Valley Boys and Girls Clubs, and agencies like Lyon Sheriff's Department and Human Services have done an outstanding job in the last 8 months in implementing new programs, participating in information campaigns and training key staff in suicide prevention with the help of the experts from the Office of Suicide Prevention.

For more information about Healthy Communities Coalition's regional action plan for suicide risk factor reduction, please call Christy McGill at (775) 246-7550. For more information about the Statewide plan for suicide prevention, please see www.suicideprevention.nv.gov. For more information about suicide prevention training for your group, please contact Misty Allen at the Office of Suicide Prevention at (775)-443-7843. For free materials such as posters and brochures on suicide prevention for your group, see www.nevadaprc.org