



## COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS



### **Preventing Suicide Starts with Everyone**

Suicide is a tragedy. It shatters families and devastates communities, and Putnam County is far from immune. In just the past year, too many individuals in our county have ended their lives deliberately. Around the nation, suicide deaths now outnumber those from motor vehicle crashes. Traditionally, both the young and the elderly have been at most risk, but the rate among middle-aged adults, 35 to 64 years old, has increased a dramatic 28 percent in the past decade.

Fortunately, suicide is also preventable in most instances.

Personally, I know of two teenagers who attempted suicide. They are children of my friends. Thankfully both survived and today they are young adults, successful, married, enjoying a full life with their own children. Obviously, timely intervention can be life changing.

Most people who think about suicide invite help in some way. If help is offered at that critical moment, suicide often can be prevented and individuals can go on to live happy, productive lives. Aware and alert friends and family can successfully intervene and connect troubled individuals to suicide prevention resources.

Last month, I encouraged 30 members of the health department to participate in a suicide-alertness training workshop called SafeTALK to learn how to recognize those who may have thoughts of killing themselves and how to effectively intervene. This responsibility is not just for health professionals and health department staff. We all must be aware, alert, and ready to act in order to guide individuals in need of help.

Every warning sign must be taken seriously and all suspicions acted upon. Anyone abusing alcohol or drugs, or who is moody, alone, burdened, withdrawn, desperate, hopeless, ashamed or experiencing abuse, rejection or loss is at risk. Suicide is a difficult subject to bring up. It is important to remember that by asking about it you don't put the idea in someone's head—you can only be helpful.

Help is just a phone call away. The 24/7 Putnam County Crisis Intervention Hotline number is 845- 225-1222. More information about SafeTALK training is available at [www.livingworks.net](http://www.livingworks.net) or through the Mental Health Association at 845- 278-7600.

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