

NEWSLETTER



Save the Date

2023 Walk for Hope

When: Saturday, September 9, 2023

Where: Lake Pacawa, Plover



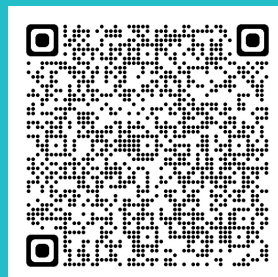
This year marks the 17th anniversary of the Walk for Hope in our community. Join your friends and neighbors by walking to provide HOPE towards preventing suicide and creating AWARENESS surrounding mental health.

Check-In and Onsite Registration starts at 9:00 AM, where you can pick up t-shirts, bottled water, and snacks. Our opening ceremony begins at 9:45 AM featuring special speakers and the presentation of our Providing Hope Award. The walk will begin shortly after, with live music and food trucks to follow!

Follow us on Facebook - Walk for Hope Event Page and/or our website for updates and more information.

Registration Cost: \$20 per walker (14 years and older)
Register by August 18 to be guaranteed a shirt!

Scan the QR code to register or
visit <https://bit.ly/3XRNB3N>



OUR MISSION

To prevent suicide in Portage County by providing hope, creating awareness and facilitating change in the community to support mental health.

OUR VISION

A suicide-free Portage County.

FOLLOW US



suicidepreventionportagecounty.org



Prevent Suicide Portage County



@pococoalition

LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Survivors of Suicide Support Group

This group provides support for those who have lost a loved one to suicide. The group meets at Dunkin Donuts on Division Street in Stevens Point. The group meets the 1st Monday of each month from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM. For additional information or questions, contact Michelle Nelson at (715) 346-5401. The group can also be followed on Facebook at [Portage County Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group](#).

Mental Health Wellness Group

This group provides a diverse range of knowledge for those who seek encouragement, hope, and support. The group meets on the 3rd Monday of every month from 6:00 - 7:00 PM at Mid-State Independent Living Consults (3262 Church Street, Stevens Point). It is free to attend and open to the public.

NAMI Peer Support Group

Peer Support Groups for individuals living with mental illness. Our support groups are open to the public and led by trained facilitators who also deal with mental illness. This group meets on the 1st Thursday of the month at St. Paul Lutheran School, 1919 Wyatt, from 6:15-7:45 PM. Please use Door 3 to enter the parking lot and follow the signs downstairs. An elevator is also available on the main level.

NAMI Family Support Group

Family Support Groups are for family members or friends with a loved one dealing with mental illness. This group meets on the 1st Monday of the month at St. Paul Lutheran School, 1919 Wyatt, from 6:30-8:00 PM. Please use Door 3 to enter the parking lot and follow the signs downstairs. An elevator is also available on the main level. Contact Linda at 715-572-7135 or Paula at 715-544-2207 for more information or if you need transportation.

MAY WAS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH!

Coalition members were busy all month long participating in community events to help spread awareness and provide education about mental health and the many resources available, including the Be Kind to Your Mind event hosted by Adventure 212 and the Portage County Safety Fair hosted by Mark Toyota. At the Safety Fair, coalition members helped over 160 youth decorate "cope" cakes and gave resources to families about healthy coping skills.

The coalition also hosted an event for the community called "Let's Taco 'Bout It!" involving a walk-thru resource fair, raffles, and tacos! Our planning committee brought together over 10 local organizations that promote and support mental well-being in our community. We received incredible food donations from El Mezcal and El Molcajete, as well as Feltz Dairy Farm. We connected with nearly 200 people to share mental health resources and build hope in our community. Thank you to our donors for making this possible!



Data from the 2021 Portage County Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) showed continued increases in the prevalence of mental health challenges among Portage County teens. In 2021, 33% of students reported experiencing symptoms of depression, compared to 29.3% in 2018, and 19% reported suicidality, compared to 17.8% in 2018.

Overall, 58% of high school students in Portage County answered affirmatively to at least one question regarding experiencing mental health challenges during the 12 months before the survey.

PREVENT SUICIDE POCO COALITION HOSTS TEEN MENTAL HEALTH PANEL

On April 21st, 8 Stevens Point Area Senior High (SPASH) students participated in a youth panel in conjunction with Prevent Suicide Portage County to gather insight from are youth regarding mental health topics relevant to them and their peers. The students' raw, real, and vulnerable responses and eloquent insights were eye opening to coalition members, as students shared the variety of stressors that contributed to current anxious and depressive thoughts and feelings.

Many students shared that the transition to life after high school was a stressor, with trying to figure out how to be independent, particularly in today's current stressful society, as well as how to navigate the many roles they occupy (student, friend, significant other, son/daughter, athlete, employee, student club member, etc.). Additionally, school violence came up as an area of frequent anxiety, which felt close to home given the shooting hoax this past fall that resulted in a true lockdown and police presence to clear the school of any threat.

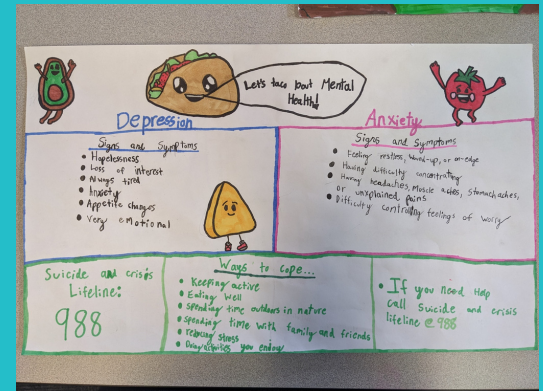
In positive news, many students identified positive adults that they connect to, particularly in school, to gain support, particularly school counselors and some teachers. In general, students are looking for nonjudgemental, validating adults to listen with a caring ear in order to support, not necessarily solve the problem. Additionally, students recommend ongoing mental health awareness and support campaigns beyond September's Suicide Awareness Month and May's Mental Health Awareness Month in order to continue the work in breaking the stigma and supporting a culture of belonging.

The coalition looks forward to continuing to gather youth feedback and partnering with local districts to continue the important work of breaking the stigma around mental health in order to provide the resources and support our students are needing.

2023 Mental Health Month Youth Poster Contest

Our annual poster contest for Portage County K-12 students was incredible this year as the theme corresponds with our event, "Let's Taco 'bout it!" Our Poster Contest is a way for students to share their knowledge of mental health and their creative talents with our community!

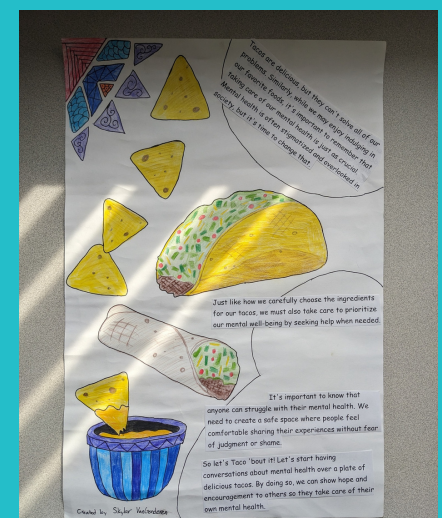
K-5th Grade Winner: Nolan P.



6th Grade Winner: Zoey V.



7-12 Grade Winner: Lia L.



THANK YOU!

The Portage County Tavern League donated \$250 with a matching donation from the Tavern League of Wisconsin to support the 2023 Walk for Hope.



YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

1 IN 5

teens and young adults lives with a mental health condition.
- National Alliance for Mental Illness

5.13%

of youth report having a substance use or alcohol problem.
- Mental Health America

64.1%

of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment.
- Mental Health America

WHY YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders in youth. This 6-hour training gives adults who work with youth the skills they need to reach out and provide initial support to children and adolescents (ages 6-18) who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care.

WHO SHOULD TAKE IT?

- Teachers & School Staff
- Coaches
- Camp Counselors
- Youth Group Leaders
- Parents & Grandparents
- People who work with youth

To learn more, visit: [MentalHealthFirstAid.org](https://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org)

To contact a local instructor or to schedule a training session for your organization, contact CAP Services Mental Health Navigation or email knichols@capmail.org

COALITION MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Stephanie Werch, CAP Services - Mental Health Navigation

Stephanie Werch is the Stevens Point Area School District Mental Health Navigation Advocate. In her role, she works with SPASD students and their families on a referral basis from counselors. As the School-Based MHN, she assists in finding community support and mental health resources and works to remove barriers to enhance resiliency and support self-advocacy. Stephanie has assisted in May Mental Health Month Planning and working the Lets Taco 'Bout It and Powerful Penguins events. She is adding to the Walk for Hope subgroup by lining up several live music artists who are volunteering their time for the event.

In the past, Stephanie has worked as the Portage County Truancy Director and as a Direct Care Advocate for Sexually Trafficked Teenagers. This summer, she is partnering with the Boys & Girls Club of Portage County to provide youth with lessons on community support and self-sustainability and instructing peer-led mental health support. She hopes to start two NAMI Raise Your Voice Clubs in Stevens Point Schools this fall. Stephanie's professional goal is to be a trusted adult who is there to listen and help teens find their own route... To be the person who was needed when we were growing up.

Outside of work, Stephanie stays busy. In her home, it is her Fiancée, Eric, and their four dogs; Summer, Bailey, Rusty & baby Henry. Most weekends are spent on their land near Merrill, named "Baileys Backwoods," or backpacking in a National or State Park. During the week, you will find her at a local concert or show with friends. She loves cooking for people, entertaining, and being in nature. Within her personal and professional life, Stephanie hopes to advocate for and support those around her.

