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Forum participants ask questions about youth suicide

Since January there have been three reported teenage suicides in Kanata

By Krista Cooney

Staff Reporter

“It’s about time,” was a common refrain on Wednesday, September 28 at the Community Forum on Youth and Suicide. Approximately 70 people showed up at the John Mlacak Centre to discuss ways to make the reality of youth and suicide a thing of the past.

In 1991, suicide was the reason for death for one out of every five teenagers. It is the second leading cause of death among today’s youth, next to motor vehicle accidents. Four times as many teenage girls attempt suicide as the number of teenage boys. Teenage boys, however, are three times more likely to succeed in their attempts.

Those are the statistics. The reality is much worse. Since last January, there have been three reported cases of teenage suicide in the area.

This is the reason the forum came to be. They wanted to look at ways to overcome the problem as a community.

“Suicide is preventable,” said Nicki Collins, a facilitator for the forum. “The idea (of the Community Forum) is to come up with directions as to where to go from here.”

Lead by Katherine Robertson-Palmer, the large group was given a brief introduction, then were quickly broken into smaller groups in order to discuss feelings, problems and solutions.

When asked why she was there, Kate Bradford replied; “I don’t want to see anything else happen.” She was referring to the fact that over the past four years, there have been five suicides at her school.

The forum centred on bringing the community, young and old alike, together, to create a better understanding.

“Kanata, Gouldbourn and West Carleton are caring communities. There’s more than one solution to this problem. We’ve got to come out with a response that fits our community” said Collins.

Several of the people at the forum had personal experiences with suicide. Heyam Qirbi, whose son completed suicide earlier this year, said that talking about this can only make it better. “Talking brings them (people at risk of suicide) out of the shell of being lonely.”

By raising the level of awareness and knowledge on the subject, the participants and co-ordinators hope to find the best ways to help prevent suicide.

“I think Sami has left me with a mission,” said Qirbi. We need communication between families, cultures, and communities.”