

# Annual Dakota walk brings awareness to suicide prevention



Students from the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families Coalition Teen Council manned a table promoting the organization in the atrium of Dakota High School during the 2013 Be Aware 5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention. Pictured left to right are Jacob Hyde, of Dakota High School, Lizzy Maniaci, of Chippewa Valley High School, Melissa Wylin, of Dakota High School, Kyle Paskulovich, of Dakota High School, Alexis LaFata, of Chippewa Valley High School and Laura Gray, of Chippewa Valley High School. SUBMITTED PHOTO

By Nicole Tuttle, For The Macomb Daily

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As Dakota High School prepares to host the sixth annual Be Aware 5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention, Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families Executive Director Dr. Charlene McGunn addressed the impact that the recent suicide of actor and comedian Robin Williams has had on the cause.

McGunn said that Williams' death has had a strong impact, particularly on adults, and has created "strong visibility" for suicide prevention, particularly the need to be more aware of potential warning signs.

"It was contrary to the way that he was viewed. It shows that it may not be as obvious... You need to be alert to the signs," McGunn said.

According to information provided by the Macomb Intermediate School District, some of the signs can include talking or joking about suicide, giving possessions away and loss of interest in things one cares about.

KnowResolve, a local non-profit suicide prevention organization, states one in seven high school students seriously consider suicide. It can be particularly important to watch for serious mood shifts in teens and not attribute this simply to adolescent growing pains, according to McGunn.

“There is a lot of development at this period, it does involve change, but look for a pattern of change and never be afraid to ask questions,” McGunn said.

The sixth annual Be Aware 5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention will be held on Oct. 18 at Dakota High School in Macomb Township. Check-in begins at 9 a.m. and the walk/run at 10 a.m. Runners and walkers will be timed by Hansons Running Shop.

The walk raises funds and awareness for youth suicide prevention. Proceeds will support programs offered through KnowResolve and the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families. Henry Ford Macomb Hospitals and Baker College have contributed funds to help support the organization of the walk, McGunn said.

Runners and walkers can register in advance at [knowresolve.org](http://knowresolve.org) and [active.com](http://active.com). Cost to participate is \$25 and includes a T-shirt as well as a bagel, fruit and beverage.

Attendees can fundraise to obtain benefits as well, according to McGunn. Top fundraiser prizes this year include a \$100 gift card to Partridge Creek for first place, a \$50 gift card to Buffalo Wild Wings for second place and a \$25 gift card to MJR Theatres for third place.

Law enforcement officials from the Macomb County Sheriff’s Office will be present at the event, and walkers will follow a path from Dakota High School in Macomb Township down 21 Mile Road to Heidenreich and through several nearby subdivisions.

Last year 275 people participated in the walk, and this year the goal is simply to raise as much money as possible for the cause and to place a greater emphasis on pre-walk dissemination of suicide awareness information, according to McGunn.