NEWSLETTER

WWW.PROJECTFRONTIER.ORG

SEPTEMBER 2026

CONNECTION MATTERS: SUPPORTING MENTAL WELLNESS, HOPE & COMMUNITY

A SIMPLE REMINDER THIS MONTH

Connection does not always require a big gesture. Sometimes it looks like:

- Checking in with someone and asking how they are really doing
- Learning someone's name
- Sitting with someone who seems alone
- Listening without judgment
- Offering encouragement
- Asking for help when you need it
- Helping someone connect with a resource or trusted person

Small moments can have a lasting impact.

As we move through September, let's continue creating spaces where people feel safe, valued, supported, and connected. Whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, every interaction is an opportunity to remind someone:

You matter.
You belong.
You are not alone.

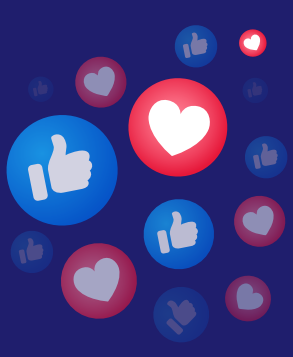




September is a month filled with transitions, new routines, and opportunities to connect. As schools and communities settle into the new school year, it is also an important time to recognize the role that relationships, support systems, and meaningful connection play in our overall mental wellness.

This month, we are recognizing Suicide Prevention Month, exploring how brain science can help us better understand mental wellness and behavior, and highlighting opportunities for young people to explore their futures through the Western Kansas Career Showcase.

While these topics may seem different, they all connect to one important idea: **people do better when they feel connected, supported, and valued**.



FOLLOW US

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS: CONNECTION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage conversations about mental health and suicide prevention.

Talking about suicide can feel uncomfortable, but avoiding the conversation does not make the problem go away. Open, caring conversations can help someone feel less alone and create an opportunity for them to seek support. Sometimes people worry that they will say the wrong thing. The truth is, you do not need to have all the answers. Often, one of the most important things you can do is simply be present.

If someone in your life seems to be struggling, consider:

- Asking how they are really doing
- Listening without judgment or immediately trying to solve the problem
- Letting them know you care and that they are not alone
- Taking changes in behavior, mood, or communication seriously
- Helping connect them with a trusted adult, mental health professional, or other appropriate support system



NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OR EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS, CALL OR TEXT 988 TO REACH THE SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE.

If you are concerned that someone may be thinking about suicide, it is okay to ask directly. Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide does not put the idea in their head. Instead, it can open the door for an honest conversation and help connect them with support.

You do not have to handle difficult situations alone. Reach out to a trusted adult, mental health professional, school counselor, healthcare provider, or crisis resource when support is needed.

WESTERN KANSAS CAREER SHOWCASE

Connection is also about helping young people see what is possible for their future.

The **Western Kansas Career Showcase** gives students the opportunity to connect with local businesses, industries, colleges, and organizations while exploring the many career paths available throughout western Kansas.

These experiences go beyond simply learning about a job. Students have the opportunity to meet professionals, ask questions, explore their interests, and begin building connections with people and opportunities in their own communities.

For many students, knowing what comes next after high school can feel overwhelming. Career exploration helps make the future feel more approachable by giving students opportunities to discover careers they may not have previously considered.

The Western Kansas Career Showcase also highlights an important message for young people: there are opportunities, careers, and communities ready to welcome them right here in western Kansas.
By bringing students and community partners together, the showcase helps strengthen connections between education, careers, and the communities students call home.

Upcoming Career Showcase Events

- September 17, 2026 – Multi-Career Showcase
  - **WaKeeney**
- October 22, 2026 – Multi-Career Showcase
  - **Oakley**
- December 3, 2026 – Multi-Career Showcase
  - **Goodland**
- January 28, 2027 – Multi-Career Showcase
  - **Oberlin**



Business Interested in Attending?

If you are a business interested in attending an upcoming Western Kansas Career Showcase—or know of a business that may be interested—we would love to connect with you. These events are a great opportunity to introduce students to your industry, share information about career opportunities, and help young people see the possibilities available throughout Western Kansas. For more information about attending, contact **efaulkender@nkesc.org**.

USING BRAIN SCIENCE TO SUPPORT MENTAL WELLNESS: MENTAL WELLNESS BEGINS WITH CONNECTION

Mental wellness does not happen in isolation—it grows through connection.

Understanding a little more about how the brain responds to safety, stress, belonging, and disconnection can help us better understand ourselves and the people around us. When people feel safe and connected, they are often better able to regulate emotions, learn, problem-solve, communicate, and build healthy relationships.

One helpful way to think about this is through the "upstairs/downstairs" brain framework. During moments of stress or overwhelm, our ability to think clearly, manage emotions, and make decisions can be affected. This can help us understand why behavior is not always simply a matter of someone choosing to "behave" or "misbehave." Sometimes behavior is communication.



The everyday interactions we have with one another can make a difference. Strong relationships, predictable structures, community-building activities, restorative conversations, and simple statements that communicate, "You are welcome here. You belong. You are safe," can help create environments where people feel seen, heard, and valued.

This understanding also matters when someone is struggling with their mental health. Being present, listening without judgment, responding with empathy, and helping connect someone to trusted adults and support systems can make a meaningful difference.

Ultimately, it invites us to consider a simple but powerful question:

What kind of climate are we creating through our everyday interactions?

Every interaction is an opportunity to strengthen connection. When people feel safe, valued, and supported, they are better positioned to learn, grow, build relationships, and seek help when they need it.

