Suicide prevention brings out supporters

The Signs of Hope fundraiser will benefit the Zero Suicide initiative.

The vast majority of that was raised by the substantial host committee of dozens of supporters, led by event host Sheri Boulos. “I’m as proud of a community that will come out to learn and to be part of a solution,” said Boulos, a longtime supporter of Maine Behavioral Healthcare. “We can learn to recognize early warning signs of suicidal thoughts, and we can learn how to react and how to help. Even one more death by suicide in Maine is too many.”

The 12th annual Signs of Hope July 28 at Portland Country Club in Falmouth was an educational event and a movement to transform suicide prevention in Maine. “It’s amazing to see the community rally around mental health,” said Kelly Barton, president of Maine Behavioral Healthcare. “Not all communities are as supportive. I joined this organization almost a year ago because I saw the commitment Maine Health was making to behavioral health services and their belief that without a strong behavioral health continuum we would never fulfill our vision of creating the healthiest communities in America.”

Zero Suicide is a practical framework being used in health and behavioral health care systems around the nation to make sure no one falls through the cracks that early warning signs of suicide are taught and identified, that anyone at risk is engaged in treatment swiftly and that systems of communication and transition are improved. The Thompson family of Cape Elizabeth has long awaited a program like Zero Suicide in Maine. Tim Thompson shared a framed photo his late son Timmy, famous in time as a Cape Elizabeth High School senior in 2014, while Nancy Thompson shared Timmy’s story. “I can only imagine that if we and Timmy’s friends had been educated on the red flags for depression or suicide, he might possibly still be alive today,” she said. “When I lost Timmy, I vowed that his death would not be in vain, and I knew that someday there might be an educational program about depression that would eventually be in all school systems. It’s important to know that suicide can be prevented, but to prevent it the people in direct contact with the person need to know what to look for and what they can do to help.”

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