

*By Jennifer Nantz*

## “We Matter” and What It Means

Suicide is no laughing matter. Numbers of those dying by suicide are on the rise and will only continue to grow if nothing is done. The concept of “We Matter” is an important movement in the prevention of death by suicide, and holds close my own heart, as well as others in the community. “We Matter” reminds others that they aren’t alone, in addition to being meaningful to those involved with mental health and its revolving issues.

“We Matter” is more than just a phrase; it’s a mentality. It’s a way of thinking that reminds us and others that we aren’t alone in this world with our struggles, and help is always there if it’s needed. Suicide often occurs when one feels there’s no way out of the loneliness of anxiety and/or depression. That sea of deep loneliness leaves many feeling that there is no other option but to quit and let oneself drown in the sadness. However, in having the mindset of keeping one another together, “We Matter” bands us together against death by suicide and keeps everyone above the surface.

The movement of “We Matter” is meaningful to me in that it has saved my own life. I’ve seen and felt the depths of the loneliness that depression can bring, and I’ve had a time when I felt death by suicide was the only way out. I was depressed and anxious constantly, feeling so trapped and alone inside my own mind and the dangerous thoughts that lurked there. I thought I may never find my way back to the surface. However, I was reminded by the concept of “We Matter” and the annual Shadow Run that my life doesn’t have to be this never ending pool of darkness just in time, giving me hope and strength in the fact that I’m not alone and inspiring me to get the help that I so desperately needed. While I do still struggle from time to time, I remember that, by the tag line of the “We Matter” concept, I’m not alone, and I can feel hopeful for my future and my mental health. “We Matter” is my life-raft that I continue to depend on and extend to others.

I see so much negativity and painful things in my school, such as bullying and online hate and criticism, as well as downright meanness and backstabbing, and I feel that “We Matter” can be implemented in a simple yet effective way to change the environment of his school from hostile to hopeful. I think there should be a form of “complaint box,” but for those who need help and.

aren't able to physically speak out. A drop-box of sorts outside the counselor's office with an anonymous form, or even an online form, would go a long way in reaching those too afraid to ask for help. Also, regular anti-bullying and suicide prevention discussions would help drive home the point that nobody is alone. I also feel the implementation of a local website containing options and resources, such as numbers for helplines and the location of safe spaces, available for students, as well as others in the community, would dramatically increase the number of those receiving help.

Hopefully, the implementation of such options would help to normalize mental health as a topic of discussion and remove the stigma around mental health issues. I feel that there is too much negativity surrounding the discussion of mental health, perhaps that it's "taboo" or "impolite" to speak of. The concept of "We Matter" is helping normalize the discussion of mental health and its difficulties. To me, this concept truly holds meaning in its power to bring people together against the challenges that people may face with mental health. This concept and movement means strength and unity throughout the community by allowing people to speak of their issues and receive the help they need without judgement, because all lives matter. Nobody should be left to drown in the ocean of mental illness. "We Matter" serves as a life-preserver to save and better the lives of those in the community and spread a positive mindset around mental illness for the betterment of the community.

Life can make it difficult to get the help one needs, among school and work and other extra responsibilities, but it's important to watch out for oneself and those around them. Mental health is like an ocean that becomes deep and polluted by illness, and "We Matter" is the lifesaver that our world needs right now, and always.