



UConn Students Plant Flags of Solace to Spread Suicide Prevention Awareness



Several hundred flags wave in front of the University of Connecticut Student Union lawn in light of Suicide Prevention Awareness Week. Students wrote encouraging messages on the flags at an event hosted by Student Health and Wellness and Active Minds.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR.

by Jaylyn Davis
STAFF WRITER
SHE/HER/HERS
iue25001@uconn.edu

In light of Suicide Prevention Awareness Week, students from Active Minds and Student Health and Wellness hosted a flag-planting event titled Field of Memories at the Student Union lawn on Wednesday, Sept. 16.

Active Minds is an organization dedicated to suicide prevention and mental health advocacy. It was founded in 2000 at the University of Pennsylvania. Today, Active Minds has over 450 chapters.

Several hundred flags were planted by students, each with two sides. The fronts depicted a heart and two phrases: “Be aware, show your care” and “Suicide Prevention Awareness Week.” On the backs were varying messages of optimism and support.

Some flags had simple messages. A few were, “I’m proud of you,” “You are enough,” “It gets easier” and “Take care of yourself.”

Other messages were lengthier, like “If you have letters to write, you have reasons to stay.”

Another powerful message read, “I understand life will kick you, but you will be okay. Don’t be afraid to seek medical help because you deserve help and happiness.”

Kristina Stevens, who is the advisor of Active Minds and the director of Student Health and Wellness, said the University of Connecticut has been honoring

Suicide Prevention and Awareness Week for over a decade.

Kayla Lembo, a seventh-semester psychology student and the president of Active Minds, said that mental health struggles are a societal issue.

“There are a lot of people who struggle with their mental health, and some of that involves suicidal thoughts,” Lembo said. “A lot of people keep this to themselves, so even if someone is struggling with these thoughts, we might have no idea.”

Stevens said about 1,100 college students die by suicide each year.

She mentioned that people who commit suicide leave a significant impact on family, friends and everyone else that knew them. These impacts provoked the creation of events such as the Field of Memories, Stevens said.

“Students throughout the course of today were writing hopeful, affirming, kind, supportive and encouraging messages on these flags, so that everybody can be reminded that they are important, they matter, they rock and they can do hard things,” Stevens said.

According to Lembo, Active Minds hold other events that highlights suicide prevention and the support that UConn students have access to.

“We did chalk yesterday, which was to spread some positivity and positive messages to show that no one is alone,” Lembo said. “Our Stomp Out the Stigma Walk later is to show aware-

ness that we see you, we know you’re here and we’re here to help you.”

Lembo also clarified that the purpose of these events is to spread awareness about suicide.

“This is just a really important topic that needs to be covered, and we want to make sure that college students and other people

know they’re not alone in this.”

Mya Matta-Paskell, a fifth-semester nursing student, said that events like Field of Memories are meant to advocate for maintaining good health, especially when classes and assignments become difficult.

“As much as education is important, taking care

of yourself is one of the more important things,” Matta-Paskell said.

Field of Memories was one of many events SHaW will host for Suicide Prevention Awareness Week, including free therapy sessions available at the Jaime Homero Arjona Building and the Center for International Students.



Students plant flags in the grass with varying messages of optimism and support. The flag-making event was part of the Active Minds and Student Health and Wellness event, Field of Memories.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR.