Advocates hope walk brings others ‘out of the darkness’

By Sgt. Will Hill
CRIER STAFF WRITER

During a weekend filled with remembrance ceremonies for 9/11, almost 1,000 people participated in the Out of the Darkness Community Walk, a three-mile walk around White River State Park Canal for suicide prevention and awareness.

The 900-plus walkers, some individuals and some in teams, walked to help boost suicide prevention and awareness for the American Foundation for Suicide. Among the teams was Soldiers and Civilians for Suicide Prevention representing Camp Atterbury-Muscatatuck Center for Complex Operations.

The 19-member team raised approximately $3,500 and won second place for funds raised in support of American Foundation for Suicide.

Shannon Kummer of the CA-MCCO team and chief lead for Strategic Resources Inc. at Camp Atterbury raised $1,350.

“We are here to support all Soldiers and (also) in remembrance of my father, John Justice, a Special Forces Vietnam veteran who committed suicide,” Kummer said.

Since Jan. 1, the Army has reported 155 suicides.

Lt. Col Anita Thurston, team captain and plans, analysis and integration officer at CA-MCCO, said Kummer was an inspiration to all.

“I, like Shannon, am a survivor of suicide. A good friend of mine committed suicide and (American Foundation for Suicide) was a good resource I could turn to.”

The AFSP Web site has many educational tips on the early signs of suicide and how to talk to someone about suicide.

Thurston said asking someone how they are doing and making sure everything is OK with them could mean the difference between life and death for someone who is contemplating suicide.

“People contemplating suicide are feeling incredibly isolated and withdrawn and can’t find a way out and those questions give them a connection to somebody opening up another door,” Thurston said.

Shannon Kummer, a chief lead for Strategic Resources Incorporated at Camp Atterbury, writes her father’s name in chalk at the White River State Park Canal in Indianapolis Sept. 12 during the Out of the Darkness Community Walk for suicide awareness. Kummer raised $1,350, the second highest amount out of the 900-plus participants.

CRIER PHOTO BY SGT. WILL HILL

Thurston said suicide is a national health problem and each year more people are addressing the issue that suicide is an illness and education is the cure.

At Camp Atterbury, the leadership made it mandatory that all Camp Atterbury workers participate in suicide awareness training.

Command Sgt. Maj. Rodney Spade, Camp Atterbury command sergeant major, said the leadership worked a two-phased, practical training program to emphasize suicide awareness and prevention methods.

“This program is a true, matter-of-fact, no-nonsense training session that really makes you take a sharp look at yourself and your Soldiers,” he said.

“Like our counterparts throughout the military, this is an important issue to which leaders at all levels must be tuned into; moreover, we must be fully aware of our Soldiers’ well-being at all times,” he said.

One of directors of Out of the Darkness Community Walk, Kimble Richardson, said she looks forward to more military participation in the future.

“If the military was more involved, it would have a bigger reach and it would give Out of the Darkness a voice that says it’s OK to talk about suicide. Thoughts of suicide are not a weakness but an illness that can be addressed through education,” Richardson said.

For Richardson, the turnout for the walk event was better than he expected.

“To see people from all over the nation join together for such an important cause is a great thing.”

Donations for Out of the Darkness are still being collected until Dec. 31.

Visit http://afsp.donordrive.com to make a donation.

Inspirational moment

Contact the chaplain’s office for spiritual or counseling needs at 526-1499 ext. 2327 or 526-1151

He skis the skies and rolls over the hills effortlessly. His dominion is overall creation. He changes the seasons. He is involved. It is that time of year when creation all around us is changing. Its eyes are getting heavy as our earth begins to yawn and readies itself for a Winter’s sleep. Do you take the time to rest properly? Do not ignore God’s design, it is to your benefit. Rest is a creation of God too.

— CH (Maj.) Douglas E. Brown, assistant chaplain

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