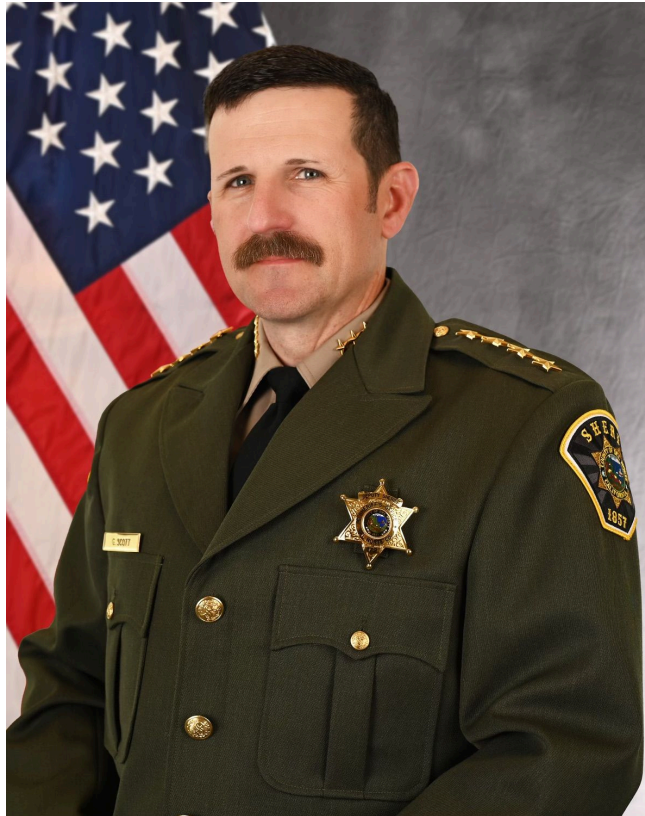


Suicide is a Dilemma Del Norte Can No Longer Ignore

September 11, 2024



September is Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month.

As the Del Norte County Coroner, I would like to make our community more aware of the shocking spike in suicide attempts and the somber results of those who chose this sad exit from an ever more complicated world in which we live.

This past August, Del Norte County recorded its sixth suicide-related death. As your Coroner, I signed off on this terrible reality, with another four months remaining in 2024.

There are many things one can do to help a loved one going through these difficult times. Being a good listener and knowing the signs of a person that may be pondering this final, devastating act. Often times it is so difficult to detect and we are very surprised when it happens.

In my years in law enforcement, I've learned so many of our children have suffered trauma which have brought them to a level of pain unimaginable. Getting them proper treatment is so important, giving them the tools to cope as they grow older and lead productive lives.

I feel it is so important to recognize the Department of Health and Human Services, Mental Health Department for deploying its Mobile Crisis Unit to intervene in preventing this desperate and final act by some of our folks. I commend our DHHS folks for their efforts to combat mental illness in our community.

The reasons one contemplates suicide are as varied and complex as imaginable: drugs, alcohol, mental illness, trauma, stresses of life; nonetheless, all ages, genders, ethnicities, and races are affected. I was surprised to learn rural communities like Del Norte suffer more suicides than the bigger cities, based on ratios per 100,000 population. The reasons vary with many studies ranging from topography, weather, poverty, and lack of services. There really is no absolute reason. Other than I want our community to know that we have resources and can help in these situation.

Del Norte sadly has a 14.8 suicide ratio per 100,000, which is above the National average.

The Proclamation the City just adopted on Suicide Prevention Month tells us what we can do. Here are its highlighted points:

- Suicide is a major public health problem with immediate and long-term effects on individuals, families and communities.
- Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, race, orientation, income level, religion or background; suicide is a major public health issue that requires vigilant attention and preventive action.
- The ongoing stressor wrought by social unrest and growing inequality increase risk for self-harm.
- Each death by suicide directly impacts numerous family members, friends, loved ones, and by extension the entire rural community.
- Research shows that 95 percent of adults would do something if someone close to them was thinking about suicide, if they only knew what to say or do.

The City Council encourages all citizens to learn the warning signs, trust their gut and use that information to ask a trouble friend, colleague or family member "R U O K? And be prepared to listen.

That conversation could change a life. If anyone suspects a family member or loved one may be contemplating suicide please do not hesitate to reach out to DHHS or DNSO for assistance.