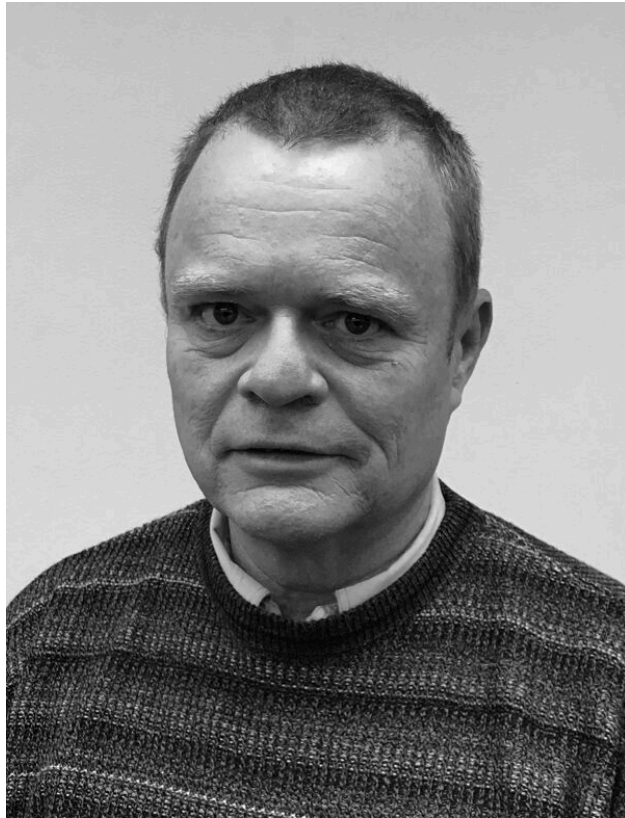


Column: Suicide is something to watch all year long

September 16, 2022



Over the years I have written a column for newspapers, I have generally tried to keep my personal life out of print for obvious reasons.

But occasionally there are things I want to share that require my to share personal things about myself or my family. This is one of those time.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month, and like many people, I have been impacted by suicide.

Last week, I interviewed Lance Nelson with the Waterfall Clinic about suicide, and a few things he said surprised me.

I was not prepared to learn that the suicide rate is much higher in rural than it is in bigger cities. I had always assumed quality of life and happiness were higher in smaller communities.

Nelson also said one of the key elements to higher suicide rates in rural areas is it is generally easier to access guns.

When talking to me, Nelson was quick to point out he has no problems with guns, but the fact is people who use guns to attempt suicide are almost always successful.

I don't know Nelson's political leanings, but I can tell you I have personally always been a Second Amendment supporter. I believe in the individual right to own guns, yet I also choose not to own one myself.

And my reasoning is very personal. Many years ago as a young adult, I did what many young men do, and I went out and bought my own gun. It was a brand new 12-gauge shotgun, and I guess my plan was to maybe hunt with it one day. I got to shoot it with a friend one time, shooting clay targets.

After that I hung it on the wall in my apartment, put the shotgun shells in my desk and went on with life. That was until one night when a friend drove up to a softball game I was at and told me another friend had gone to my apartment, got into a fight with his wife and used my gun to shoot himself. Yes, he died a few hours later.

That night, the police took that gun. Several months later, the police called and asked if I wanted the gun back, and I said no.

Maybe a decade later, suicide again struck close to home when my wife's sister used a gun to take her own life. There were a lot of reasons, and a progression of depression that led to that night, but for those left to mourn, the sorrow is still ongoing years later.

Since then, one of my own children has suffered from severe mental health issues and depression and had strong suicidal thoughts. Thankfully, through a very diligent mother, years of hard work with therapists and the grace of God, my kid is doing much better. But the lingering concern is still there.

Through the year, there are weeks and months set aside for different things, all that are important to some. This month, National Suicide Prevention Month, is one that sticks out to me. From personal experience, I can assure you suicide is a real problem. I can assure you people are hurting, often those close to you.

Pay attention to your loved ones. If they seem down, spend some time with them. If they say something about dying or suicide, seek help. If it is an emergency, call 988, the new Suicide Prevention Hotline number, or 9-1-1.

If you have guns, keep them if you want. Buy more if you want. But keep them safely away, especially if anyone near you has shown signs of depression or suicidal thoughts.

Most of all, love those close to you and let them know you do. Make sure your friends and family know they have value. I have heard from many through the years how one nice person, one statement of love or support was the thing that kept them going. Be that person, this month and every month.

