



PRESS RELEASE

The City of Oakwood
30 Park Avenue
Oakwood, Ohio 45419

Subject: Oakwood Public Safety Department Mental Health Training

Date: June 2, 2021

OAKWOOD, OHIO:

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, statistics show that approximately 20% (51.5 million) of U.S. adults experienced a mental health condition in 2019, and it is estimated that 10 percent of all law enforcement calls for service involve a person with a mental illness. In an effort to equip every officer with the necessary skills to safely and effectively do their job, the Oakwood Public Safety Department has implemented a series of trainings in 2021 focusing on mental health.

The first of these trainings, Talk Saves Lives, was recently presented by Dr. Sallie Wilson Luther, who is a member of the Oakwood Board of Health, and Leigh Ann Fulford. In this training, officers learned about the warning signs and risk factors of suicide, as well as how to communicate effectively with someone who is thinking about suicide.

Luther and Fulford are volunteer board members for the Ohio Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and brought the first Out of the Darkness Walk to Dayton in 2013. This walk, which has provided tremendous support to suicide loss survivors over the years, attracted more than 2,000 participants at its last in-person event at Oakwood's Mack Hummon Stadium in 2019. Because of the growth of the walk and logistics with parking, the decision was made to move this year's walk to Welcome Stadium on Sunday, October 17, 2021. Luther said, "The Oakwood community has been at the forefront of suicide prevention the last eight years. We could never have accomplished what we did without the help and support of Oakwood's City Council, Oakwood's Schools, and the Oakwood Safety Department. We are grateful for Oakwood's support of events and programs surrounding mental health and suicide, and we are happy to support officers and members of the community with suicide prevention programs funded by AFSP's Out of the Darkness Walk."

In addition to the Talk Saves Lives training, all sworn Safety Department personnel will complete a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training course for Public Safety Officers during 2021. The MHFA course is designed to provide officers with the ability to recognize symptoms of mental illness and substance abuse, effectively engage a person in crisis, and connect positively with the person in need. Oakwood officers will also receive de-escalation training that will provide officers with the essential tools and tactics needed to achieve the most desirable outcome when dealing with an individual in crisis.

Additionally, the Oakwood Public Safety Department will send all first-line supervisors to an intensive 40-hour Crisis Intervention Training certification course, and a select group of officers will attend a leading suicide intervention training program entitled Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). Also, all public safety dispatchers will complete a crisis intervention companion training course providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and respond effectively to a caller in a mental health crisis.

Oakwood Public Safety Director Alan Hill stated, "The goal of conducting a series of trainings focused on mental health is to provide our officers with the necessary skills and resources that allow them to respond appropriately to and engage individuals suffering from a mental health condition. Increasing an officer's knowledge and understanding of mental illness will assist them in de-escalation, ensuring the best outcomes in challenging situations." All Oakwood sworn officers are trained and certified as police officers, firefighters, and paramedics/EMTs.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
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