

NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 2, 2014

PAYING IT FORWARD IN WARREN COUNTY

You may be familiar with the concept of “pay it forward” as it has been around for many years, gaining mainstream popularity after the 2000 movie by the same name. Essentially, it is performing an act or gesture for someone else with the expectation of nothing in return. What the giver desires is for the recipient to perform a good deed for someone else, big or small.

Mental Health Recovery Services of Warren and Clinton Counties (MHRS) and the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Warren and Clinton Counties (SPC) recently acknowledged some of these good deeds which promote mental wellness in our community. Patti Ahting, MHRS Associate Director and SPC Chair, noted “These folks have given of their time, energy, and talents: to prevent future problems, to be a good friend, to expand community awareness, to offer hope, and to be a helpful neighbor. There are many, many stories we could tell about great things happening in our community, but these are a few extraordinary ones!”

Kathy and Scott Michelich are survivors. Through the unexpected and tragic loss of their daughter, Apphia, they have channeled their grief into endeavors to positively impact the community. The Michelichs established the Apphia Memorial Fund and have provided thousands of dollars to the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Warren and Clinton Counties to carry out awareness efforts and train individuals who work with those impacted by suicide. This foundation also provides funding to the national Brain & Behavior Research Foundation. Kathy has also been an integral member of the Coalition, sharing her perspectives and expertise. In addition to the Coalition, the Michelichs have donated their talents and knowledge to many other community organizations including the Family and Children First Council, the Human Rights Committee for Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Community Correctional Center governance board, Head Start and Early Learning Centers, and Warren County Community Services. Their contributions have made a true difference in the lives of many through their leadership and generous donations to suicide prevention efforts.

The Michelichs have resided in Morrow for 25 years. Kathy is employed at Warren County’s Ohio State University Extension and Scott is employed at Afidence IT Consulting in Mason. They are members of Antioch Church at Countryside YMCA.

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Photo outline:
Scott and Kathy Michelich

The REDO Group at Waynesville High School was created after the school's first "Respect Everyone Despite Odds" (REDO) day last school year. This group of 6 enthusiastic and energetic teens lead by Guidance Counselor, Cathy Joefreda-Wells, saw a need for increased awareness surrounding suicide in their school and community. So, for September's Suicide Prevention Week, the group planned and carried out a series of school-wide awareness activities. These included large banners posted in the school and at the tennis courts, signage in the halls, and awareness exercises at lunch and throughout the day. For five days, the students lead the activities, unveiling a new approach each day. Suicide is not an easy topic to talk about but these youth took on the challenge with a vengeance! In the process, they offered up hope, friendship, kindness, and help to their fellow students in need.



Photo outline:
(Left to right) Molly Keeton, Evan Crichton, Cathy Joefreda-Wells, Carissa Stamm, Emily Wells Carly Allen, and Brittany Bellar

The Michelichs and Waynesville High School's REDO Group were each recently bestowed the **Power of Prevention Award** by the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Warren and Clinton Counties. This award began in 2011 with the purpose of recognizing individuals and organizations who have shown leadership or opened doors above and beyond their job duties. Specifically:

- To recognize exemplary leadership in supporting mental health through prevention programs, particularly in the area of Suicide Prevention
- To honor those who are "facilitators" of the prevention programs

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“Suicide prevention can be a difficult topic due to stigma and fear, however it is an issue many people are faced with – whether it be through an interaction with a family member, a co-worker, a friend, or even an acquaintance. It is important for everyone to feel comfortable having a conversation with individuals expressing suicidal thoughts and directing them to help. The Michelichs and Waynesville High School’s REDO Group have brought the topic to the forefront. We would like to publicly acknowledge them and express our genuine appreciation for their leadership and dedication to the prevention cause, stated Ahting. “As you can see, these individuals have stepped forward and taken the initiative to promote mental wellness. These preventative services will pay off in the future exponentially which is the true essence of ‘Paying it Forward.’ They are all wonderful community partners!”

To learn more about Mental Health Recovery Services, the Suicide Prevention Coalition and local resources, visit www.mhrsonline.org . For 24 hour assistance, call the Toll-Free Crisis Hotline for Warren & Clinton Counties at 1-877-695-6333 OR 1-877-695-NEED.

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