



Connor May—THE BATTALION

Hands holding in support of Suicide Awareness Month, Sept. 12, 2022.

# 'You matter'

CAPS, Active Minds, Aggieland offer prevention resources, advocate for suicide awareness

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Texas A&M Counseling and Psychological Services, or CAPS, Active Minds and the Brazos Valley community offer support throughout the month of September to bring awareness to suicide and to offer prevention resources.

Suicide Awareness Day was Sept. 13, but related activities are available throughout the month. A&M has partnered with Brazos County to host events throughout September, honoring Not Another Aggie Suicide Awareness Month. Their website includes events that will take place, including: Breathe In and Stretch Out Yoga, Donuts for Downloads, Coffee with a Counselor and a HelpLine meet and greet.

CAPS said they are partnering with the Suicide Awareness & Prevention Office, or SAPO, to continue to recognize the need for A&M to raise awareness of resources, reduce stigma of suicide and increase interpersonal connections through awareness programs.

"This year, we will again be hosting a kick-off event to Suicide Awareness Month and our four-week walk challenge courtesy of our partnership with AgriLife Extension's Walk Through Texas History program," the CAPS website reads. "In addition, we will be hosting several events and programs throughout the month of September."

Assistant director of CAPS, Santana Simple Ph.D., said these events throughout the month partner with other organizations on campus, including the Division of Marketing & Communications and Athletics.

"The rest of this month we will be hosting coffee with a counselor. This is a time for students to be able to connect with counselors and maybe even learn about counseling," Simple said. "A yoga session will also be in the art gallery. All of the dates of events are on our website to look at."

Business management senior and Active Minds President Randall Schmalriede said their organizational events will take place throughout the week of Sept. 11 to 17.

"Our big event is [the] pinwheel display which will be out all week," Schmalriede said. "We are wanting to table sometime during the week as well so that everyone can get a chance to see us on campus again."

According to wtaw.com, Brazos County

has greatly discussed and formally recognized the significance of Suicide Awareness Month in August.

"September's designation as Suicide Awareness Month was recognized with a proclamation during the Brazos County commission's Aug. 16 meeting," according to wtaw.com. "The proclamation, read by County Judge Duane Peters, included activities taking place at Texas A&M that includes an awareness event Wednesday, Sept. 7, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Rudder Plaza."

Simple said CAPS' partnerships with the Brazos County community have raised awareness about mental health, and several peer organizations attended the suicide awareness kickoff event on Sept. 7.

"We partner with the Brazos Valley Council and many different mental health organizations in general within the community," Simple said. "One of our biggest partners is the AgriLife Extension which provides and promotes wellness across the state."

Schmalriede said Active Minds stays involved with A&M students and the community at large throughout the year.

"We do a lot of tabling events in the [Memorial Student Center] and events in general," Schmalriede said. "We try to stay visible to everybody. Our big goal as an organization is to get people talking about mental health and that it is not such a scary subject. Letting people know what resources are available is important."

Simple said CAPS holds workshops throughout the year, with the next hosted on Sept. 28, to help students be aware of trigger signs or other symptoms.

"We offer our 'Gatekeeper Training,' [and] QPR [which is] Question, Persuade and Refer," Simple said. "These are the types of questions to ask, statements of support to make and how to refer students to the right sources. This is available for faculty, staff and students. We then have Campus Connect, [which is] specifically oriented for students to be aware of how to support a peer going through any mental health struggles. Gatekeeper 2.0 is taken after both of the training when having additional questions or concerns."

Schmalriede said this month can be challenging for many, especially those whose lives have been affected by suicide.

"I know it can be a really tough day, it brings up a lot of emotions for a lot of people," Schmalriede said. "There are so many people that are here for you and to talk to in general. You matter more than you think you do and you impact more lives than you think. If you are struggling at any time just reach out to someone, there are so many different resources and people that can help."

## HERITAGE CONTINUED

"We broke the record this year, we have 24 events on our HHM calendar ... and then at our kickoff event [on Sept. 15 at 6 p.m. at] Rudder Plaza, we have 17 organizations and departments coming together to do activity booths," Benavidez said. "It's really big this year, and I'm really proud ... [showing] that we're a Hispanic-serving institute now and ... that there are Hispanic Latino, Latina, Latinx people all across campus. They're in so many different departments, so many different student [organization] groups ... and they're willing to come together to celebrate [HHM]."

With a festivity as big as HHM, misconceptions on the celebration can arise, such as what, specifically, is being celebrated, or most commonly, who falls under the Latino, Lati-

na, Latinx categories. Benavidez clears the air on such misunderstandings and states the importance between a balance of identity, open-mindedness and history.

"I think one thing about HHM is that, although it does use the word Hispanic, it's also for Latino, Latina, Latinx people, it's for Chicano people, it's for people of all different ethnicities, nationalities [and] races," Benavidez said. "We're all here to celebrate culture and heritage and it's important to look to the past and recognize that [we have] come a long way ... It's open to everyone, so even if you're not Hispanic Latino, Latina, Latinx you can always join in and learn something or just celebrate with other people."

For more information on HHM at Aggieland, visit the dms.tamu.edu.

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