

## **Morgan & Nay Funeral Centre, Madison, IN**

With today's overload of continuous information from all types of communication channels, people often feel no relevance to the messages and instantaneously move on to the next feed.

The mental health findings of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 2023, however, definitely let Morgan & Nay Funeral Centre connect. According to the CDC report, more than 50,000 Americans died by suicide last year, the highest ever on record. Rodney Nay, president/owner of Morgan & Nay and the county coroner for eight years, unfortunately knew some of those statistics belonged to his community. In Jefferson County (Indiana) which sports a small population of approximately 20,000, official records show seven suicides and 10 overdoses in 2021, three suicides and 10 overdoses in 2022, seven suicides and 11 overdoses in 2023 and so far zero (0) suicides and two overdoses in 2024 as of June 30. When two ladies who had lost loved ones in separate incidents to suicide and overdose formed a group and sought public assistance, Morgan & Nay gladly joined the effort to bring awareness and hopefully solutions to the problem. The funeral home ...

- funded an employee to take a two-day suicide prevention course to learn about effective approaches
- offered free facility space in its monument center for weekly meetings
- purchased mental health material for reference and/or free distribution, as well as self-esteem and motivation posters for the meeting area
- designated an employee on behalf of the funeral home to attend a state legislative hearing in support of more funding for suicide prevention awareness, as well as review statistics with the town mayor in hopes of increased local support
- promoted the group's meeting dates on the funeral home's Facebook page
- connected with a local counselor to provide 1:1 service for possible referrals
- and organized and hosted a public reception for the group's first anniversary on June 19, 2024.

The first meeting in 2023 netted 27 people, with anywhere from 2 to 17 now attending each week. On behalf of Morgan & Nay, the employee who completed the suicide prevention course also attended an Indiana State Legislature hearing in February 2024 to express the Centre's support for more government funding to combat suicide tragedies. In addition, a private cell phone number is shared for those who need immediate help 24/7, whether it be simply to talk or connect with a mental health agency with trained professionals. These suicide preventive measures through Morgan & Nay are not official work assignments with designated hours and budget but rather a community service initiative that Centre employees/owners have added to their regular, operational responsibilities. Prior to the group's organization and Morgan & Nay's promotion and involvement in the quest, many potential victims of suicide and/or their families did not know the resources available. Suicide does not keep business hours and there is no thought of google or phone directory searches at the time of suicide contemplation. And most have never heard of the new federal government hotline number 988 for mental health and suicidal issues. In addition to the weekly suicide prevention meetings at the Morgan & Nay facility, there also is a second weekly meeting option focusing on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In Mr. Nay's opinion, the impact/aftermath of suicide and overdose death parallel very closely for the survivors. The first program aims to prevent whereas the second entity concentrates on mental stability and recovery when suicides do occur. To celebrate the

endeavor's first anniversary, Morgan & Nay hosted a public reception at the funeral home on June 19, 2024. Mr. Nay, along with the two initial organizers of the group, "Citizens of Jefferson County for Suicide Prevention," spoke about the program's progress and future direction. For each of the 2022-23 suicide victims in Jefferson County, Morgan & Nay formed an attractive photo display, surrounded by fresh flowers. Approximately 50 people attended the event. In front page, headline position, the local newspaper (Madison Courier) covered the event with a very detailed story about the suicidal status in Jefferson County and the new avenue for help. The article, which noted Morgan & Nay's leadership in the endeavor, certainly expanded awareness and reached a diverse, county-wide audience. In his reception remarks, Mr. Nay noted, "We have people living who may not have been living ... without the effort of this initiative. It is Morgan & Nay's community and human responsibility to be part of this constructive quest to preserve life and improve life for others." With the statistic numbers significantly down for 2024, as of June 30, the problem is not over but progress is prevailing.