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Kevin Kuhl, PE Director of Public Works City of Yankton, South Dakota

Dated: October 27, 2015

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Suicide

From Page 1

taken many of these types of training courses, but never one this intensive on suicide,

she said. "I think it is very beneficial to know everything that was taught today," Empkey said. "I like the handouts. I can go back and give them to my team so they can utilize ne information too.

The group spent the first part of the day identifying the scope of the problem, comparing national and local numbers. But QPRT instructor Lori Montis said it can be difficult to get accurate statistics.

We spent time looking at what groups and age levels are at higher risk," she said Suicide attempts are hard data to get. A lot of times, it gets recorded as an accident because there is not proof of an actual suicide

According to the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), there were 41,149 completed suicides in the United States in 2013. There were also more than 1 million attempts.

Montis works as a Suicide Crisis and Support Director at the Sioux Falls Helpline Center. She has been QPRT certified for the past five years and handles suicide risk individuals on a daily basis.

Because suicide is a serious problem, some of the risks can be unrecognizable. Seventy-five percent of suicides see physicians within a week to a month before their deaths. For this reason, Montis emphasizes the importance of assessing and documenting individuals to determine their level of risk and proper safety measures before it becomes a problem.

"I think it is really helpful for them to know, even if they are not going to be the one to do that whole assessment, what to look for, what questions to ask and who to connect them to," she said.

The interview process involving heightened active listening, without judgements or opinions, is essential to

encourage full disclosure, Montis said. Patients can be hesitant to share information with a health professional out of fear of involuntary hospitalization, incarcera-

tion or unwanted rescue. "There is therapeutic value just in letting them tell their story," Montis said. "A lot of times people just want to talk to somebody. If they feel isolated and alone, our being willing to listen to what is not going so great in their life is a huge value in and of itself."

For family members who may be looked to for help and advice, just listening can be difficult. When a person is talking about all these reasons that he or she may want to end their life, it can be easy to rush into giving individuals reasons not to. But Montis warns if we jump too quickly to try and fix things, those at risk individuals may just shut down.

The hardest part is getting them to be honest with you and to trust you enough to be honest with you," Empkey said. "If they don't trust you, they are not going to

tell you the truth. They are not going to open up.

Once a professional or individual has all the information, he or she can develop a safety plan for the person at risk. If someone is at low or moderate risk level, the interviewer can attempt to develop an agreement with the individual whereby the person will commit to seeking help through a safety plan or an outside source. If a person is high risk, has been uncooperative or distant, and refuses to remove a means of suicide, additional measures may be required. It is up to the professional to

use proper judgment. 'You're hoping that the talk was helpful and that they are OK now," Montis said. "By the end of that conversation, if your gut says that you are unsure if this person is OK, we need to connect them with the next level of care, whatever that might be.

Mortis explains that a person expresses detailed statements when they are being honest about removing the option of suicide from

his or her mind. Examples include, "I won't do it. I won't put my family through that. l'il call you back personally if I need to." This shows that the person has specific action steps and committed to not hurting someone else

due to his or her actions. Yankton has a variety of resources to help those individuals and families who are struggling with suicide: Lewis & Clark Behavioral Health, Contact Center, **Human Services Center and** local shelters, as well as church groups and school counselors. These resources and the knowledge they provide are the best defenses against suicide.

The most important thing is to just be educated on the topic," Empkey said. "Educate yourself and education your children because there is such a stigma related to mental illness and suicide. Have open communication in your family and don't be ashamed to ask for help.

Follow @alwooc01 on Twitter.

Christmas

From Page 1

announcer can say something as they come down the

No parking is allowed on the parade route, and barricades will be set up at 3 p.m., Schulte said. Area residents stake out their favorite places from which to watch the parade.

This year's Candlelight Christmas features some changes

In the past, children could visit Santa Claus after the parade. This year, he will also appear before the parade at 5 p.m. at the Senior Center. Santa will ride in the parade and return afterwards to the Senior Center.

Another new event is the Nativity play at 8:30 p.m. in the Hartington City Auditorium basement. The play features children 3-6 from Holy Trinity School and CCD (religious education) classes.

Vendors will also operate in the auditorium starting at 8:30 p.m. "It's the most vendors we've ever had in the auditorium," Schulte said.

In addition, the Memory Tree Lighting will represent a change. The event starts at 6:30 p.m. on the Cedar County Courthouse lawn.

We sell large 5- or 6-inch ornaments. People buy them for \$5, take them home and decorate them however they want in memory of a loved one who has passed away,' Schulte said.

"They turn (the ornaments) back in, and they are placed on the tree. We have the clergy give their talk on the reason for the season. The proceeds (from the Memory Tree) go to the Cedar County Cares giving tree which buys gifts for needy persons.

The ornaments are left on the tree through the Christmas season, Schulte said. The individuals can pick up the ornaments after the display or leave them for next year.

The Candlelight Christmas schedule calls for food and dining at various stands, buildings and churches; wine tasting; open houses at businesses kicking off the Christmas buying season; and live music at the Broadway Lanes.

The Knights of Columbus soup and pie supper raises money for charity, Schulte said. This year, the proceeds will benefit Paul Howey, who was injured in a head-on collision this summer and lost part of his leg, she said. The supper runs from 5-7 p.m. at

the KC Hall. Candlelight Christmas also will feature bell ringers from 6-6:45 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, a Christmas cookie contest, coloring contest, Hartington-Newcastle Student Council dance and two photography

In addition, the "Reindeer Monologues" will perform on Friday and Saturday nights for adult audiences at the Main Street Bar, Schulte added.

"We have eight reindeer, and we each do our own reading. There are no memo-

rized lines," she said Candlelight Christmas arose from Chamber members kicking around ideas for a holiday event, Schulte said.

We thought of what we could do to bring people to Hartington's downtown and benefit the businesses," she said. "We went to the listing of Nebraska events and saw someone had a lighted vehicle parade. We thought that would be fun to do, so we talked about it.'

Schulte liked the idea of a Candlelight Christmas.

Well, to me, Candlelight Christmas had a warm, fuzzy feeling and we could base it on lights and lighting up the buildings. We would have the vehicles in the parade. she said. "We talked about how, when we were kids, the businesses would be open at night and you would come to town and see everybody. We kind of wanted to bring back that nostalgic feeling.

The event has grown

steadily through the years, she said. "We put a lot of work into it. It's not an easy thing to plan," she said.

However, Candlelight Christmas has become a holiday tradition with a lot of fun, Schulte said.

'We've been doing it for 15 years, so my kids were involved and now their kids are part of it," she said. 'They're away from home, but they still try to come back for it."

Does she hold any concerns about the forecast for snow this week? Not if history has any bearing.

'We've never had snow on the ground for the Candlelight Christmas," she said. 'We've had flurries during the day but never snow on the ground. One year, it was 60-some degrees. For more information,

check out the Facebook page for Hartington's Candlelight Christmas.

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Refugees

From Page 1

In a press release issued late Wednesday afternoon, Daugaard cited his concerns about national security for his

That is why I am joining many other governors in calling on the federal government to re-examine our process for background checks of refugee applicants seeking asylum and to reconsider whether the United States should continue to accept refugees at current levels," he said in the release. (South Dakota) Sen. (John) Thune, Sen. (Mike) Rounds and Rep. (Kristi) Noem have also called on the federal government to take these actions.

As of late Wednesday, governors from 34 states, also including Nebraska and North Dakota, had announced they would not accept refugees from Syria, who have been left homeless due to the ongoing Syrian civil war and the conflict with the Islamic State.

However, the states may not have a final say in the decision. The Refugee Act of 1980 appears to give the executive branch broad powers for placing refugees in the country, a fact Daugaard acknowledged in his release.

"Governors do not have the authority to ban refugees from their states, or to refuse to accept refugees," he said. These decisions are made by the federal government.'

But he mentioned the "legitimate concerns" South Dakotans have about the danger possibly posed by refugees.

"One of those concerns is the president's plan to accept Syrian refugees," Daugaard said. "While many of these refugees are seeking to escape terrorism, the sad events in Paris remind us that terrorists can take advantage of refugee programs to gain access to western nations.

Whether South Dakota is in line to actually receive refugees is unknown. Daugaard noted the state has not received any refugees from the current group, nor has the federal government contacted the state to make such arrangements.
"Ultimately it is very

unlikely that any Syrian

refugees will be resettled in South Dakota," he said. "The federal government resettles refugees in places that already have populations of the same nationality or ethnicity, and there is no sizable Syrian population in South Dakota." Daugaard noted the

inscription at the foot of the Statue of Liberty, which declares, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe

"Those inscribed words near the monument gifted to us by France remind us that the United States is a nation of immigrants that seeks to help those who seek asylum," he said.

The governor added, "In order to continue this tradition of helping the tired and the poor from other nations, we must first exercise prudence and be confident that adequate safeguards are in place to protect against terrorism. Our greatest priority as a nation, and my first priority as governor, is to keep our people safe."

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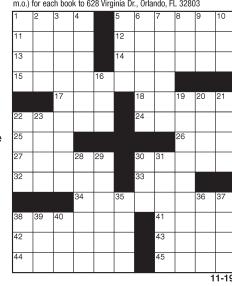
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