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## NEWS RELEASE

### Annual Suicide Prevention & Awareness Walk Panhandle Health District – August 28, 2023

Join the Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN) of North Idaho at their annual suicide prevention 5k event to end suicide and raise awareness on September 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am in Riverstone Park. The event is in remembrance of those lost to suicide, supports those touched by suicide, reduces the stigma associated with suicide and creates much needed resources to prevent suicide.

“Many, if not all, people in our community have been touched by suicide in some way,” said Don Duffy, Panhandle Health District Director. “The walk is a way to bring all of us together, honor those we’ve lost, and continue to move towards our goal of zero suicide.”

The SPAN walk is a way that people can connect with each other and connect with evidence-based resources focused on mental health. Local organizations will be in attendance and participants will have an opportunity to visit with them throughout the morning. Attendees will also enjoy music, snacks, coffee, water, and opportunities to honor loved ones.

In 2020, suicide was the 9<sup>th</sup> most common cause of death in Idaho and the state’s suicide rate is 1.4x that of the national average. In 2021, Idaho lost 387 residents to suicide and of those 46 were from north Idaho. SPAN of North Idaho is trying to change those statistics by educating and advocating for the community.

“PHD’s SPAN program operates with volunteers throughout the community who have a passion for ending suicide,” said Duffy. “With their help we have not only been able to put on this event, but also provide suicide prevention training, distribute harm reduction material such as gun locks and medication lock boxes, and partner with the state on initiatives to end suicide.”

Suicide is a major challenge to public health. It contributes to premature death, morbidity, lost productivity and health care costs. Suicide causes are complex and determined by multiple factors. The goal of suicide prevention is to reduce factors that increase risk and strengthen support factors. Everyone has a role in preventing suicide.

**Register online:** [www.spannorthidaho.com](http://www.spannorthidaho.com)

Registration on the day of the event is available beginning at 8:30am.

Registration is free. This year's commemorative shirts are available for purchase.

The 2023 SPAN 5k title sponsor is Northwest Specialty Hospital.

Learn how to recognize potential suicide risk in individuals, how to speak to them effectively, and how to get them to help here: [healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/behavioral-health/warning-signs-and-how-help](http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/behavioral-health/warning-signs-and-how-help)

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**Panhandle Health District** provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals, and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.