

Dear Stillwater County News Editor,

Montana has ranked among the top five states with the highest rates of suicide for the past 40 years. We can do better. We must lower these numbers because lives are being lost from an epidemic that shouldn't be as large as it is. If you don't know the warning signs of suicide, you are in danger of losing someone to suicide.

Montana now has the highest rate of suicide in the nation. In 2015 Montana was number one. Our rate per 100,000 is 23.7 which is nearly twice the national average. Suicide has surpassed car accidents as the number one cause of injury-related death in the US.

Low levels of Vitamin D could be a cause of inflammation, which can be a cause of depression. Exposing 25 percent of the skin's surface area to 10 minutes of sunlight three days per week will maintain adequate levels in the majority of people. Montana is located very high off of the equator, making us have less sunlight than states closer to it. In Montana we also have 4 seasons, with about only 3 months of summer.

Some people think that if you don't talk about suicide, and if we don't address it as an issue, it'll go away. Some might even think that if you talk about it, it will put the idea in someone's head. All that we have been doing is ignoring the issue. According to Mayo Clinic, "It's really a silent epidemic and it has been for 100 years."

Some of the warning signs of suicide are: substance abuse, anxiety, withdrawal from things they once enjoyed, anger, recklessness, isolating from family and friends, and a few more. Risky behavior is also a big sign. Some examples of that include: increased use of alcohol and drugs, looking for ways to kill themselves, looking for materials or means, giving away prized possessions, calling people to say goodbye, and a few others.

Another issue is that people don't talk about it until they've lost someone to suicide. Suicide is an issue that could be eliminated if we get the word out about it. If people know the warning signs and know how to prevent it, suicide will no longer be the leading cause of death. Suicide won't be as big of an issue as it is today. Whether we're number one or in the top five, it's too much. We need to fix this.

Sincerely,  
Trinity Coddington,  
Columbus, Montana