

Break the silence

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Dear Editor,

Our community has lost its fair share of friends to accidents — avalanches, big mountain falls, rock slides. By nature we all do big things here and we all understand the element of risk involved. But over the past three months, we've lost so many friends to suicide that this statistic trumps the number of friends we've lost to the mighty San Juans.

Nationally, one in every four people battle some form of mental health problem, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Almost 20 percent of struggling adults have more than one diagnosis. If there are about 7,500 people living in San Miguel County, that's almost 2,000 people trying to cope with some form of mental health concern. For some it's not so difficult. You see a doc, take a daily med and, for the most part, you feel better and your friends and family are none the wiser. For others, daily life is much more difficult — and for their friends and family, it can get downright scary. Over the last few months we've seen both sides of this.

I'm reminded of how people used to whisper the word cancer, as if speaking it out loud might somehow invite it into our lives. So, as a community, let's break the silence that surrounds mental health. On June 29 at Wilkinson Library, Tri-County Health Network is going to lead a discussion that will be a step in bringing this topic out of the shadows. It will be free to the public and, I hope, standing room only. Please watch and listen for more information.

We all know that something has to change regarding the way we deal (or not) with mental health issues. Please, let's get together and talk about community action.

And to those of you that struggle every day, know this: We will not be OK without you.

Sincerely,

Stacey Wright