

# The Crimson White

## Groups join to spread suicide awareness on campus

By [Angie Bartelt](#) on October 10, 2012 12:00 AM CST

In the United States, a person dies by committing suicide every 13.7 minutes, which adds up to over 38,000 lives claimed every year, according to The American Foundations for Suicide Prevention. This public health issue does not discriminate by age, gender, sexual orientation or race.

In an attempt to create awareness and advertise forms of help for people living in Tuscaloosa struggling with suicidal ideations and depression, the National Alliance on Mental Illness at The University of Alabama, or NAMI, the counseling center and the University's Psychology Department have teamed up this fall for the Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk, to take place this Sunday, Oct. 14.

"There will be suicide help cards and information on knowing the signs of suicide," Holly Prewitt, staff therapist at the UA Counseling Center, said. "We will have information on the local SOS, Survivors of Suicide Tuscaloosa chapter, available for students who may benefit from this support group. We will also have brochures about counseling center services."

Lisa Dunn, the director of the Alabama chapter of the American Foundations for Suicide Prevention, coordinates the walks across Alabama. Dunn will team up with Lee Keyes, the executive director of UA's Counseling Center, to sponsor this weekend's event. Keyes will also be taking the stage to speak on behalf of the counseling center on coping skills and suicide prevention.

"There is help out there, and these are the resources on campus," Becca Kastner, a graduate student in psychology and an officer in NAMI, said. "If students are in crisis, this awareness walk and the counseling center or NAMI is a really good resource for dealing with suicide and depression."

The walk hopes to raise \$5,000 to fund research based on understanding and preventing suicide. Additionally, NAMI hopes to raise their own \$600 for the event. The donations gathered from the Out of the Darkness walk will go toward funding educational programs that can help create further knowledge and awareness, as well as teach the warning signs that can lead to suicide, in order to reduce the risks.

This specific NAMI event is not only for the University but the community. The funds gathered will go toward a statewide Alabama fund for high schools on suicide prevention as well as awareness seminars and classes.

As reported by the AFSP, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S. among adults 18-65 years old and the third leading cause of death among teens and young adults. In Alabama alone, there were 679 suicides reported last year. In the United States, it is estimated that a suicide attempt is made every minute.

“I think that even if you haven’t struggled with depression or suicidal thoughts yourself, almost everyone knows someone who has, whether that be family or friends,” Kastner said. “People are going to have some sort of experience with depression. It means something to everyone.”

The UA Counseling Center will have an information table set up at the Ferguson Center from Oct. 9 through Oct. 11, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day. This table will have information on the walk and how to register. The Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk will meet Sunday, the day of registration, at 1 p.m. in the Ferguson Center, and the walk will begin on the Quad at 2 p.m.