

Bringing mental illness out of the darkness



By: [Hollie Thrasher](#)
Email: hthrasher@waaytv.com
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Huntsville, AL (WAAY TV) - Robin Birdsongs brother took his own life last year.

"We are here in honor of my brother Marty. He suffered through depression for a lot of years and it's sad to know someone who is going through that," she said.

Birdsong, along with over 100 people gathered in Braham Springs Park for the Out of the Darkness Walk. The event, sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is held to raise money for awareness. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among juveniles and the second leading cause of death among college students but the topic is often avoided.

"Over 90 % of people who die by suicide suffer from some sort of a mental illness and that's most likely clinical depression. Unfortunately, only about 30 % of those people actually seek treatment," explained AFSP Director Lisa Dunn.

"We know that if we can erase the stigma and bring mental illness out of the darkness, hence the name of the walk that we are going to be able to save lives," she continued.

The foundation provides resources for those suffering from depression and works with families who have lost loved ones, like Marty.

"You feel a lot of guilt when someone commits suicide because you think maybe you could have done something and so this organization has helped my family handle the guilt that we all suffer from," said Birdsong.

All the participants said they want to change the way mental illness is viewed so that maybe lives can be saved.

If you or someone you know is suffering from depression or has thought about suicide there is a national hotline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the number is 1-800-273-TALK.



[Slideshow](#)

Families gather to honor lost loved ones