Out of the Darkness Campus Walk is April 3

The statistics are staggering: Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for college students, and undiagnosed and/or untreated adolescent depression is the third-leading killer of individuals ages 15 to 24.

To bring awareness to suicide prevention and mental illness, 400 members of the Sacramento State and Sacramento communities are expected to participate in the Out of the Darkness Campus Walk on Thursday, April 3, sponsored locally by the University’s Student Health and Counseling Service’s Active Minds group and nationally by the nonprofit American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

“I commend all those who are strengthening Sacramento State’s suicide-prevention efforts with the Out of the Darkness walk,” says President Alexander Gonzalez, who will address participants at the start of the walk. “Student-driven and student-focused initiatives like this walk are an integral part of the comprehensive health and counseling programs we offer on campus. I am very proud that our students, faculty and staff are making Sacramento State a leader in raising awareness about mental illness on college campuses.”

Registration for the walk is free. Go to http://bit.ly/1IX62Ls to preregister or sign up at the event. Sac State’s fundraising goal is $12,000. Free parking is available for participants from noon until 10 p.m. on the top floor of Parking Structure III.

The half-hour walk will follow a course from The WELL to the front of campus and back. It’s the centerpiece of an ambitious suicide-awareness effort that includes an afternoon-long Mental Health Fair and a post-walk candlelight vigil.

“There will be good and positive energy,” says walk coordinator Katie Hodgson, a case manager with Sac State’s Counseling & Psychological Services. “We want to help people feel more empowered. We want to remember those we’ve lost, and we want people to take a stand and speak up.”

Sac State student Nielsen Gabriel, president and CEO of Associated Students Inc., also will address the walkers before they begin their cross-campus trek.

“I was selected to be part of the first cohort of Active Minds two years ago,” says Gabriel. “Our biggest goal for the year was implementing Sacramento State’s first Out of
the Darkness walk. Since its onset, it has grown so much, which is clearly indicative of
the fulfillment of the walk’s endeavor.

“We wanted to reach out to not only students but the community, and let them
know that mental health issues are real, and there is no shame at all in seeking
services. I hope to see this event grow even more in the future, so as a community we
can help fight the stigma of seeking mental health services.”

Here is the schedule for the April 3 Out of the Darkness Campus Walk and
related events, all on The WELL’s lawn:

2-6:30 p.m. – Mental Health Fair, featuring 20 community mental health
agencies, including Sutter Center for Psychiatry, WellSpace Health and the TLCS
Mental Health Crisis Respite Center. Walk participants can write their thoughts and
sentiments on a banner. They can create special greeting cards for loved ones. And
they can pick up strings of beads to carry on the walk.

6 p.m. – Gonzales and Gabriel address participants prior to the start of the walk.

8 p.m. – Candlelight vigil to remember those touched by suicide. A representative
of Sacramento’s AFSP chapter will address the gathering, and anyone wishing to share
a story about depression or suicide is welcome to speak as well.

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at
(916) 278-6156. – Dixie Reid

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