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Smart phones are a part of our daily lives. Most of us use them without thinking twice. They have cameras, GPS and viruses just like computers, but this common item can be deadly for children.

People who attended the iGuardian Program Tuesday night at the county complex learned how smart phones make children easy prey for the criminals. The program was organized by April Martin, University of Tennessee Extension program and Elise Driver, Coordinator of Red

School Health. Predators can use smart phone to cyberbully children. Cyberbullying is when an adult uses information received from a child to their own advantage. According to Jonathan A. Hendrix, Special Agent/Senior Firearms Instructor Homeland Security Investigator, "the best way to avoid it is block the account, don't accept new accounts and don't use accounts that they don't know and to tell their parents."

Even with all the preventative measures, Hendrix said predators will find a way to slip through the cracks and get to the children. Another way they can do it is through GPS on smart phones. Criminals can find the location of the child with it. This can be extremely dangerous because some children have been killed this way.

Hendrix says, "Social media such as Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr and music.ly are ways for predators to operate as well. Social online platform is example of the social element."

Hendrix pointed out that educational seminars such as the one this past week will help to raise public awareness thereby making it harder for predators to get to children.



Duane Sherrill photo  
**County Mayor Tim Stribling signs a proclamation making September Suicide Prevention Month in DeKalb County. He was joined at the signing by Lena Higgins and Mark Allison of the Upper Cumberland region of the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network.**

## September is Suicide Prevention Month

DeKalb County had the fifth highest suicide rate among the state's 95 counties for the year 2016 and it was second highest in the 14-county Upper Cumberland Region according to statistics reported by the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network.

In 2016, the latest year for which county-specific figures are available, DeKalb County's age-adjusted suicide rate was 41.3 per 100,000 people, translating into eight reported suicide deaths. That is up from 26.1 per 100,000 or five reported suicide deaths in 2015 and significantly up from 15.6 per 100,000 people or three reported suicide deaths in 2014.

The DeKalb suicide rate is also higher than the state

average of 16.2 per 100,000 population for 2016.

Given the bleak numbers, County Mayor Tim Stribling signed a proclamation this past week designating September as Suicide Prevention Month in DeKalb County. Lena Higgins and Mark Allison of the Cookeville Upper Cumberland region of the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network joined County Mayor Stribling for the signing.

In Tennessee, more than 1,000 men, women, and children die by suicide each year. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of all deaths in Tennessee and the second-leading cause of death among people ages 10-24. According to the Tennessee Department of Health, there were 1,110 recorded suicide deaths in the state in 2016, at a rate of 16.2 per 100,000 people. That's up from 16.1 per 100,000 in 2015.

Clay County had the highest suicide rate among the fourteen counties of the Upper Cumberland Region at 51.7 per 100,000 with four deaths. Jackson County had the lowest rate in the Upper Cumberland with no reported suicides in 2016. The next lowest was Fentress County at 5.5 per 100,000 with one death. Hardeman County was the only other county in the state to report no suicides in 2016.

Lewis County led the state among the 95 counties in reporting the highest suicide rate at 67.2 per 100,000 with eight deaths.

DeKalb County's suicide rate was at 16.6 per 100,000 in 2006 and 2007 with three deaths each of those years. But the rate soared to 48.1 per 100,000 in 2008 with nine deaths. The rate dropped to 26.5 per 100,000 with five deaths in 2009 but went back up to 37.4 per 100,000 with seven deaths in 2010. DeKalb's suicide rate for 2011 was 26.5 per 100,000 with five deaths and 15.9 per 100,000 in 2012 with three suicides

and 15.7 per 100,000 in 2013 with three deaths.

In almost all cases, suicide can be traced to unrecognized, untreated, or poorly treated mental illness. It can happen to people of either sex, any race or ethnicity, and any economic status. The average suicide death leaves behind six survivors—family and friends of the deceased—all of whom are at increased risk for a suicide attempt themselves. As if the emotional and psychological toll were not enough, suicide and suicide attempts cost the state of Tennessee \$1 billion a year in medical treatment, lost wages, and lost productivity.

The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) and its allies in the public health, mental health, and social service fields are joining forces to recognize the month of September as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. During this annual observance, TSPN and its allies arrange several educational and memorial events across Tennessee. These projects help teach the general public about the problem of suicide and how it can be prevented. They also provide an opportunity to remember those lost to suicide; to encourage survivors of suicide, survivors of suicide attempts, and people who have triumphed over mental illness; and to recognize individuals who have made notable contributions to suicide prevention efforts in our state.

Details about the Suicide Prevention Awareness Day observance and other events planned across the state will be announced on the TSPN website ([www.tspn.org](http://www.tspn.org)). Additional information about Suicide Prevention Awareness Month is available from the TSPN central office at (615) 297-1077 or [tspn@tspn.org](mailto:tspn@tspn.org).

You can reach out for help and hope by contacting the crisis text line. Simply text "TN" to 741 741.

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