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As we're well into the holiday season, I've taken some time to reflect on those among us who are suffering rather than celebrating. Many of these friends, neighbors, and relatives may be suffering without anyone really knowing. The kind of suffering I am referring to is that of depression. According to psychologist Anita Sanz, depression tends to increase during the holidays due to an increase in demands (perceived as stressful), family issues, and being unable to manage expectations.

Miss Murray 2018, Jessica Christensen, has spent much of this year raising awareness of suicide and depression prevention. Her platform was a message of HOPE, an acronym for Hold On, Pain Ends. Sharing her own story of her battle with depression, Jessica was interviewed by Nicea DeGering on a Good Things Utah segment in May and organized a successful "HOPE Walk" held at Murray Park on May 26, raising over \$1000 for suicide prevention.

On November 3 the Murray Area Chamber of Commerce partnered with Honor365 in sponsoring an event called Ten4 Responding, which is intended to raise suicide awareness and to support the mental health of veterans and first responders. Honorees at the event included Murray Assistant Police Chief Joe Tarver, Murray Battalion Chief Jordan Peterson, and our paramedic physician advisor Dr. Adam Balls, who is also a veteran of the United States Air Force. Deputy Chief Tarver is a 35-year veteran of law enforcement who has been a strong advocate of suicide awareness and prevention, as well as the victim advocate program in the Murray City Police Department. Battalion Chief Peterson has a master's degree and a doctorate in Psychology and has been using his education and experience to help promote mental health among the first responder community. These dedicated public servants were honored in a ceremony at the Ten4 Responding banquet for their efforts and service. I am pleased to congratulate them on their recognition and to thank them for their contributions.



Of course, the issue of depression goes far beyond the first responder community and is not limited to one season of the year. This matter has become a major concern among our school-age children. I applaud the efforts of parents, teachers, and school administrators to raise awareness and look for solutions to this epidemic among our children.

I encourage all citizens to become aware of the signs and symptoms of depression and to become familiar with the resources available for help for ourselves, our friends, or loved ones. The National Suicide Prevention 24-hour “Lifeline” number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Resources can be found at [utahsuicideprevention.org](http://utahsuicideprevention.org) and [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org). There is also a smartphone app available called SafeUT, found at [healthcare.utah.edu/uni/programs/safe-ut-smartphone-app/](http://healthcare.utah.edu/uni/programs/safe-ut-smartphone-app/).

I am optimistic that we, as a society, can make further progress in recognizing the signs and treatment of depression and the prevention of suicide. Everyone has their own unique struggle, and it is often a close friend or family members who can step in and make a difference in the life of an individual.

I wish each of you a joyous Holiday Season, and many more!