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Oak Ridge Mayor Warren Gooch, center, holds the signed proclamation. He's joined by Brian Buuck, left, Ridgeview's CEO and Sheila Michels, right, a member of Ridgeview's Board of Directors.

## Suicide prevention – a shared responsibility

BY MICHAEL YATES

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A year has passed since the suicide of comedian and Oscar winning actor, Robin Williams. Since then, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report over 40,000 people in this country have died by suicide. Clearly, we still have work to do. September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness month and is a timely opportunity to remember that help and hope are available for people living with, as William Styron wrote in his 1990 memoir, "Despair beyond despair."

In 2013, 41,149 suicides were reported, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death for Americans. In that year, someone in the country died by suicide every 12.9 minutes. That means every 13 minutes a host of friends and family of the deceased are left trying to untangle a knot of pain, traumatic grief, and confusion. As the number of people dealing with this knot is growing, so too is our shared responsibility to act.

So, what can we do?

Experts believe that most suicidal individuals do not want to die. They just want to end the pain they are experiencing. Experts also know that suicidal crises tend to be brief. Early recognition of suicidal behaviors combined with timely intervention, leads to lives saved.

We can help prevent suicide through effective, science-based services," said Acting SAMHSA Administrator Kana Enomoto. "There are programs in place to save lives and help people out of their despair and toward a brighter future. By reaching out to people contemplating suicide — everyone — family, friends, teachers, faith community leaders, co-workers, healthcare providers — can make a positive difference."

Awareness, early intervention, and encouragement to seek help are important steps we can take. Here in the Anderson, Scott, Morgan, Campbell, and Roane County areas, immediate help comes from Ridgeview Behavioral Health Services who have caring professionals available to help through the Mobile Crisis Team, 24 hours a day at 1-800-870-5481. The national suicide crisis helpline is also a valuable resource 1-800-273-TALK (8255), the release said.

Hope and treatment are available. Together, let us deepen our understanding of the despair felt by many. Together, we can make a life saving impact and difference.

*Michael Yates is Ridgeview Behavioral Health Services' director of development.*