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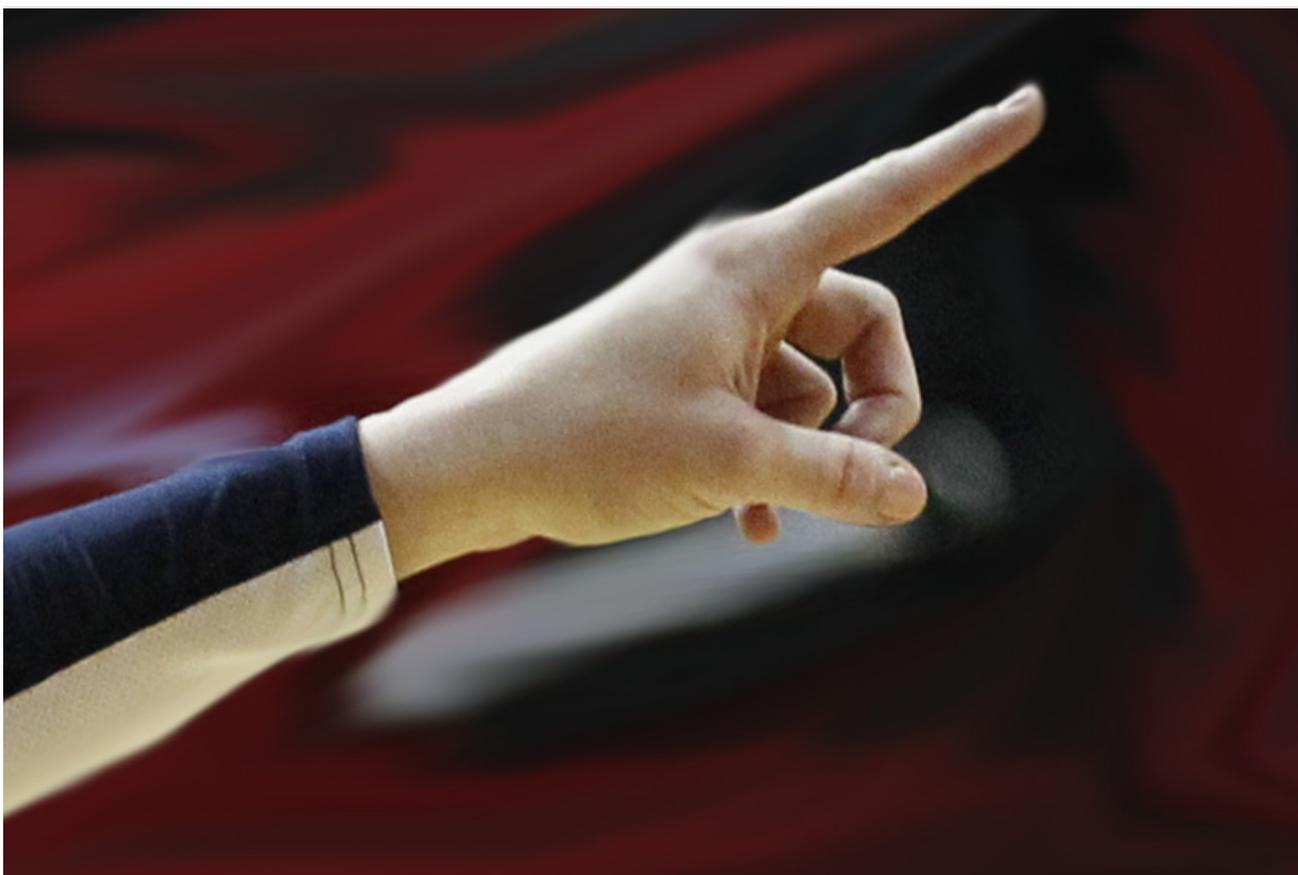
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## May 4 event to educate youth about suicide prevention and awareness

A new event designed to help Fresno-area youth learn the importance of suicide awareness, the “R U OK? U Matter!” Youth Forum will take place 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 4, at the Fresno Convention and Entertainment Center’s Valdez Hall.

A day of fun, growth, knowledge and action is planned for about 200 Fresno youth ages 14 to 25 who have signed up for the event, which is the first of its kind in the area, said Leann Gouveia, director of Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss.

The nonprofit, non-political organization was founded in 1985 by Dick and Sandy Gallagher of Fresno, who lost their 17-year-old son David to suicide, to provide emotional support to survivors of suicide loss and educate the community about issues related to suicide.

The free, public event is presented by Fresno [Survivors Of Suicide Loss](#) and other community partners including the Fresno State [Student Health Center](#), who will provide an educational presentation and brainstorming session for college-age students.

A youth council will be created following the event for participants to become advocates for health and wellness and suicide prevention among their peers.

The event’s theme, “R U OK? U Matter!” encourages attendees to have a positive outlook on themselves and the people in their life regardless of age, race, or economic background. Participants are encouraged that everyone has value and that it is OK to ask for help.

A welcome session will include guest speakers and a message from Gouveia, followed by, an art show and resource fair throughout the forum and additional activities including interactive art projects, live music, zumba sessions and a photo booth.

Participants will attend two breakout sessions. The first addressing perceptions and knowledge of depression and suicide-related issues and the second, a brainstorming session to give youth an opportunity to voice opinions about how to improve wellness among their peers.

The day will conclude with a final guest speaker, Carolyn Brown of Visalia along with raffle prizes, giveaways and the presentation of the completed interactive art projects. All participants will receive a free T-shirt.

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Brown, who lost her daughter, Kari Jorgensen, to suicide in 1996, will share her personal story. Kari was a Fresno State student athlete at the time.

The conference is funded by grants from the National Association of Independent Life Brokerage Agencies Charitable Foundation and Union Pacific Foundation. Local sponsors include the Fresno State Student Health Center, California Mental Health Services Authority, Kings View Behavioral Health Systems, Comprehensive Youth Services, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission, ACEL Fresno and Fresno County Behavioral Health/MHSA.

While participant registration is full and now closed, sponsorships and resource fair booths are still available. For more information – contact Leann Gouveia at [leann@fresnosos.org](mailto:leann@fresnosos.org) or Melissa Watkins, suicide prevention grant coordinator at Fresno State, 559.278.1023.

**Related Links:**

- [Student Health Center – Fresno State](#)
- [Fresno Survivors Of Suicide Loss](#)

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