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## **OC Health Care Agency's 2nd Annual 'Light Up Hope OC' Campaign Marks September as Suicide Prevention Month**

**SANTA ANA, CA, (September 7, 2023)** — In a commitment to raising awareness, the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) is announcing the return of the "Light Up Hope OC" campaign during the month of September for Suicide Prevention Month. The campaign aligns with the statewide "Strive for Zero" initiative, to prevent suicides. Each night this week, the Agency is lighting up the County Administration Buildings in teal and purple, the official colors of suicide prevention.

"Light Up Hope OC shows the County of Orange's commitment to suicide prevention, especially among our veterans," said Chairman **Donald P. Wagner**, Third District Supervisor. "Suicide rates among veterans is twice as high than non-veterans. Help is out there for our frontline heroes."

"Depression, feeling down, suicidal thoughts – they can affect everyone regardless of age, race, income or education," said Vice Chairman **Andrew Do**, First District Supervisor. "It's important to know that you're never alone. If you can't talk to a friend or a family member, there's always someone at 9-8-8 ready to listen."

The HCA's Office of Wellness and Suicide Prevention (OWSP) coordinates suicide prevention efforts at the Agency level and interfaces with local and statewide initiatives to build community awareness to reduce suicides in Orange County (OC). The office has aligned with the State of California's Striving for Zero Suicide Plan framework to implement local strategies for suicide prevention.

“Suicide impacts all communities, regardless of race or income,” said Supervisor **Vincente Sarmiento**, Second District. “Understanding the signs and having open conversations about mental health emphasizes the importance of reaching out to those who may be struggling.”

“Suicide is a leading cause of death among young adults, many of whom feel ill-equipped to navigate the mental health system,” said Supervisor **Doug Chaffee**, Fourth District Supervisor. “Effective and compassionate mental health care becomes a safety net and lifeline for young adults and youth who battle suicidal thoughts.”

“Nearly one in five women living in Orange County experience symptoms of depression during or after pregnancy. Suicide is a leading cause of maternal death in the first year following childbirth due to the added stressors, lack of sleep, and physical and hormonal changes even if new mothers never experienced these symptoms prior to pregnancy. We want new moms to know they are not alone,” said Supervisor **Katrina Foley**, Fifth District.

So far this year, an average of 20 individuals each month have tragically lost their lives to suicide in Orange County. The median age of 49 for the decedents in Orange County, underscores the importance of reaching out to individuals of all ages and walks of life.

“Even one suicide is one too many. Through the 'Light Up Hope OC' campaign, as well as the ongoing efforts of the HCA’s Office of Wellness and Suicide Prevention, we are striving for zero suicides in Orange County,” said the HCA’s Chief of Mental Health and Recovery Services, **Dr. Veronica Kelley**. “We all play a role in preventing suicide. I encourage our OC community to support one another in the pursuit of mental wellness and not be afraid to discuss suicide prevention with loved ones who may be struggling.”

To learn more about the warning signs of suicide or the "Light Up Hope OC" campaign, visit [www.LightUpHopeOC.com](http://www.LightUpHopeOC.com). If you or someone you care about needs immediate assistance or support, call or text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 9-8-8. For additional resources visit [www.OCNavigator.org](http://www.OCNavigator.org) or call (855) OC-LINKS.

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