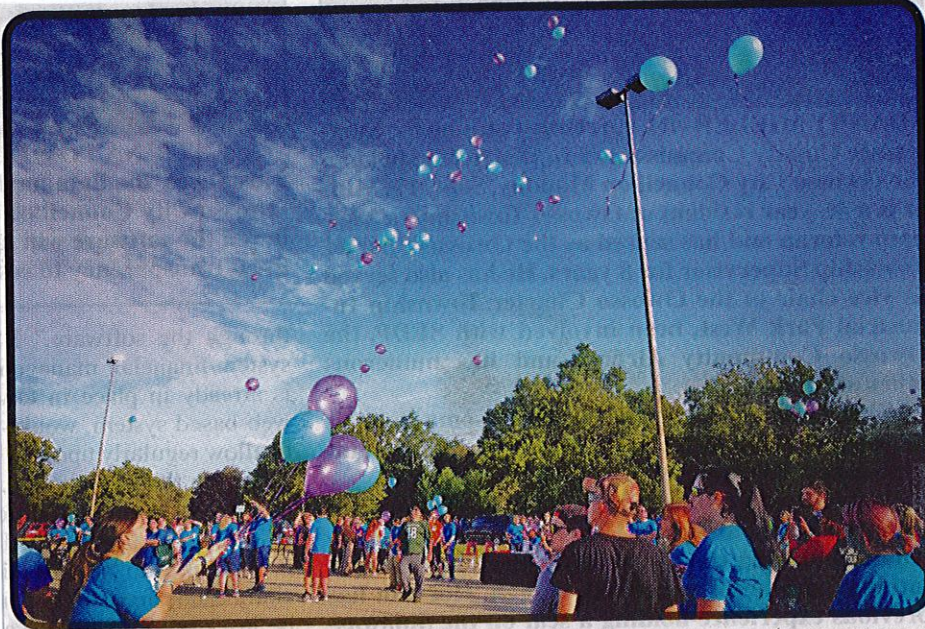
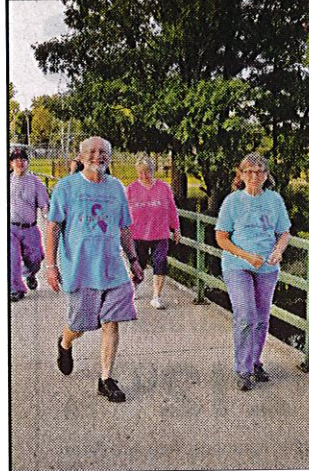
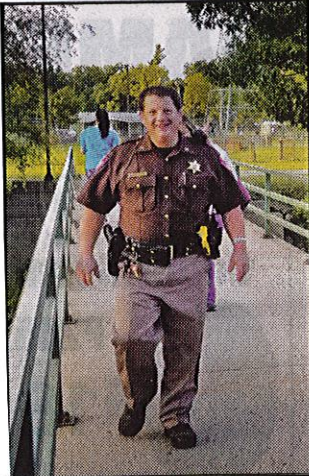
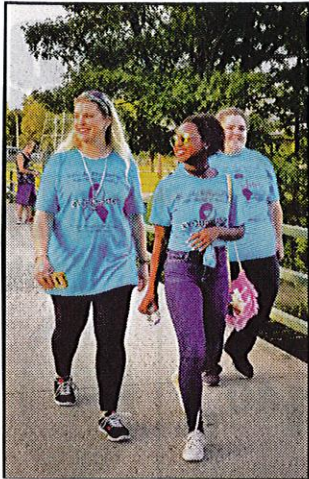


The Independent

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HUNDREDS OF BALLOONS were set free in a ceremony to commemorate the first Suicide Prevention Walk held in Owosso on Wednesday, Sept. 19. (Independent Photo/Karen Mead-Elford)

Related Photos Inside

Suicide Prevention Walk Brings Awareness

by Karen Mead-Elford, co-editor

The first Suicide Prevention Walk began in downtown Owosso on Wednesday, Sept. 19 at 6 p.m. at a critically important time to the Shiawassee County area after the recent death of 17-year-old star athlete Carson Vincent, who had only just graduated from Ovid-Elsie High School with the class of 2018. Over 220 individuals from throughout the county gathered in the parking area behind the JCPenney building to attend the walk that had been organized through Shiawassee Health & Wellness and Baker College. Though every person participating had a personal motivation or backstory for doing so, the real message to take in is that so many chose to come out to bring awareness to the entire community. Random comments on the subject included – “I lost my best friend in college,” “suicide affects every family at some point,” “my veteran uncle was a victim of PTSD,” or “kids just have so much more to contend with in modern society with bullying and social media.” One common point made from various people pointed out the absolute need – a must – for society to move beyond the stigma of mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety.

It should be made clear that the Suicide Prevention Walk was organized prior to the passing of Carson Vincent on Sunday, Sept. 16. Numerous organizations participated by offering educational information and laying down a pathway to connect to local agencies that are readily available to assist as needed.

A memorial balloon launching took place at 6 p.m. that evening with the releasing of hundreds of purple and teal balloons, some with letters to loved ones handwritten on them, others with notes and prayers attached to the strings. The walk, which

