

Indiana Post Raises \$12,500 for Suicide Awareness

A VFW-sponsored walking event garnered attention about veterans suicide, also raising funds for a cash-strapped prevention hotline

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For the second year in a row, members of VFW Post 1587 in Speedway, Ind., and its Auxiliary walked to raise awareness about the rate of suicide among veterans.

Last year, the Post sponsored its first Walk 22 event and raised \$10,000. This year, the event garnered \$12,500. The goal for 2019 is \$15,000.

According to Post Commander Tim Kanyuh, the money raised was donated to Families First Indiana for its Crisis and Suicide Intervention Hotline. Crisis intervention specialists are available 24 hours a day by calling 1-800-273-8255 or texting CSIS to 839863.

“A lot of us have been touched by someone who has committed suicide,” Kanyuh said, referencing a fellow Iraq War veteran. “We just want to see it end and want to do what we can to help.”

About 60 people took part in the two-mile walk in September that weaved throughout the streets of Speedway, home to the Indianapolis 500.

Along the way, the walkers stopped at local businesses to drum up donations and let people know why they were walking.

Due to the number of stops along the route, it took about two hours before everyone convened back at the Post for a celebration.

Additionally, the Post raised donations two to three months prior to the event. Both the Post and Auxiliary offered matching funds.

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Kanyuh credits immediate Past Post Commander Sheila Corcoran for her work in planning the walk both last year and this year. Corcoran, the first Iraq War vet to lead the Post, is now District 11 commander.

“To be quite honest, Sheila had a hard time finding a group to donate the money to,” Kanyuh said. “A lot of people never even returned our calls.”

According to Gina Hays, director of communications and development at Families First, the hotline receives about 16,000 calls a year from people in crisis.

“Our Crisis and Suicide Intervention Hotline has no sustained source of funding,” Hays said. “So you can imagine how excited we were to receive this gift from VFW. It is so wonderful.”

Kanyuh, who served in Iraq in 2008 with the Indiana Army National Guard’s 1st Bn., 151st Inf. Regt., said he is confident that next year’s fundraising goal will be met.

“I’m already working on the 2019 Walk 22,” he said.

This article is featured in the January 2019 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor of VFW magazine.