



**AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR
Suicide Prevention**



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Ribbon Cutting Ceremony held to mark Official Start of North Country Out of the Darkness Walk to Fight Suicide Campaign

Elizabethtown, NY (May 26, 2017) –A ribbon cutting ceremony was held May 17, 2017 to mark the official start of the [North Country Out of the Darkness Walk](#) to Fight Suicide Campaign. The ribbon was cut by Walk Founders Deb and Doug Jerdo, who lost their son to suicide and became advocates to raise awareness for suicide prevention, hoping to prevent other families from losing a loved one to suicide. Town Supervisors James Monty from Lewis and Michael “Ike” Tyler from Westport joined the ribbon cutting to show their support; stating their concern as former corrections officers and the unusually high rate of suicide within the corrections and law enforcement fields.

Garra Lloyd-Lester, Associate Director of the [Suicide Prevention Center](#) office in Albany, relayed his perception about suicide prevention as being “more than stopping people from wanting to die, suicide prevention is about helping people want to live.” Valerie Ainsworth, Executive Director of the [Mental Health Association in Essex County, Inc.](#) is also the Executive Director for [Homeward Bound Adirondacks](#), and is hoping to raise awareness to the continued need for improved access to mental health treatment and suicide prevention efforts in the Veteran community. Walk Sponsor [Adirondack Health](#) was represented by Communications Coordinator Jessica Collier.

The Out of the Darkness Walk is the main fundraising event for the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#), and is being organized by members of the [Essex County Suicide Prevention Coalition](#) and members of surrounding communities. The North Country Walk is in its 9th year, and is scheduled for Sunday, October 1, 2017, at the Olympic Speed Skating Oval in Lake Placid. Over the last 8 years, the Walk has raised more than \$220,000 to fund research as well as local suicide prevention, education, training and survivor of suicide loss support programs for North Country residents.

The Official Start of the campaign signifies the beginning of concentrated efforts to enlist walkers, both in person and virtual, volunteers for planning and on the day of the walk, sponsors for cash, in-kind donations and prize or basket raffles. To register for the North Country Walk, visit www.afsp.org/northcountry. For more information about corporate sponsorships, in-kind donations, basket raffles or to volunteer, contact Walk Chairperson Shelby Davis at (518) 962-2077 or Shelby@mhainnessex.org.

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Photo Courtesy of Erin Velsini, Essex County Mental Health

Pictured left to right: James Monty, Lewis Town Supervisor; Jessica Collier, Adirondack Health; Garra Lloyd-Lester, Suicide Prevention Center NY; Deb and Doug Jerdo, Walk Founders; Shelby Davis, 2017 Walk Chairperson; Valerie Ainsworth, Mental Health Association in Essex County, Inc. & Homeward Bound Adirondacks; Krissy Leerkes, Office for the Aging & NY Connects; Michael "Ike" Tyler, Westport Town Supervisor. Not pictured: Stephen Valley, Essex County Mental Health Services; Laura Marx, Area Director, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health through education and community programs, develops suicide prevention through research and advocacy, and provides support for those affected by suicide. Led by CEO [Robert Gebbia](#) and headquartered in New York, and with a public policy office in Washington, D.C., AFSP has [local chapters](#) in all 50 states with programs and events nationwide. Learn more about AFSP in its latest [Annual Report](#), and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following AFSP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

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