



FCCLA Project Summary Page

Digital Stories for Change

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Purpose of the project

The purpose of our project is to inform individuals on the importance of mental health in the agriculture community. Within this digital story, our main objective is to raise awareness concerning the escalating rates of suicide within the industry. Additionally, we aspire to educate individuals on the distinctive stressors and warning signs prevalent in agriculture, while also providing information about the numerous resources available to those with thoughts of suicide.

Relationship to FCS and/or related careers

Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) is dedicated to cultivating the development of students and their families with the goal of promoting loving and secure homes that contribute to the establishment of strong communities. Our digital story, titled "Fields of Support: Growing Resilience in Agriculture's Fight Against Suicide", places a spotlight on the Family First program, with a particular focus on the Balance unit. This unit emphasizes the importance of enabling young people and families to prioritize self-care, thereby empowering families to overcome obstacles and achieve overall wellness. There are a multitude of careers that relate to the Families First unit and our digital story. For example, careers that focus on serving and caring for others are a part of this broad category. A few examples of careers in this area include Psychiatrists, Social Workers, Behavioral Health Clinicians and Counselors.

Research

Through our research we found the following:

Statistics:

- According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the agricultural industry exhibits a higher level of suicide, surpassing the rates of all other occupational groups.
- As reported by Tyne Morgan in the Farm Journal in September of 2023, suicide rates in the agriculture work force are 3.5 times higher than in the general population.
- From 2000 to 2020 the prevalence of suicide in rural communities experienced a surge of 46% compared to a 27.3% increase in metro areas as reported by the CDC.
- The CDC reports a total of 49,449 deaths by suicide in 2022.

Unique Signs of Depression/Suicidal Intent in Agriculture:

- Change in routines/decrease in normal activities
- Care of livestock declines
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Increase in alcohol and drug abuse

- Increase in illness
- Increase in farm or ranch accidents
- Appearance of farmstead declines
- Guilt and low self esteem

Mental Health and Suicide Resources:

- Dial 988-National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call, text or chat online for free, confidential mental health services available any time 24-7.
- Missouri Agri Stress Helpline- Call or text 833-897-2474: This helpline is also free, confidential and available 24 hours a day. This helpline is unique because phone lines are serviced by individuals familiar with agriculture.

Background Information

Our digital story “Fields of Support: Growing Resilience in Agriculture’s Fight Against Suicide” comes in response to the unfortunate loss of three farmers within our local area due to suicide. The importance of addressing agriculture-related suicides became evident and we found it imperative to educate community members about the signs and indicators linked to these suicidal tendencies.

Goal of the Project

Having recognized the alarming suicide rates in the agricultural sector, our digital story focuses on raising awareness about the distinct challenges facing farmers and ranchers, along with the indicators of potential suicide. Utilizing the Families First program, we chose to educate our small farming community on the importance of balance and self-care in their daily lives through our digital story. Immediately following STAR event competition, we will launch a social media campaign utilizing our digital story with a goal of reaching 100,000 individuals. If our digital story provides the information needed to save just one person from suicide, our months of effort will be entirely worthwhile.