



Waunakee Rotary Club

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Cheryl Wittke, Executive Director of Safe Communities, spoke at the Oct. 18 Rotary meeting about how to make communities more safe.

Cheryl said instead of starting another group to work on the issues of safety in Dane County, the founders of Safe Communities wanted to find a way to bring all the existing organizations together.

She said about 350 groups, ranging from law enforcement agencies to neighborhood organizations, are involved and participate in one way or another.

To get up and running, Cheryl said, the organization applied for a grant from the National Transportation Safety Board.

Cheryl explained how the group determines which projects it will focus on. She said study data on what injuries are occurring in the community and what people are concerned about is a help.

According to Cheryl, the three biggest injury-related causes of death in the county are falls among the elderly, traffic accidents and suicides, and all three are very preventable.

Wisconsin ranks second in the nation in terms of deaths caused by falls, Cheryl said. Nobody quite knows why that is the case, but it is definitely a cause for concern.

Wrong shoes, bifocals, medication, medical conditions and a number of other factors all can factor into falls, Cheryl said. But opportunities are now available, she said, for certain types of physical therapy or balance work that is able to help the elderly prevent falls before they happen.

Cheryl also said Vitamin D plays a big factor in both balance and bone strength, even more so than calcium. She said it is especially important in Wisconsin to obtain the vitamin in your diet because in November through April each year we don't get

enough sunlight to provide adequate amounts of it.

Traffic safety is also a main initiative for the group and the No. 2 cause of injury-related death in the area. Cheryl said that 50 people a year in Dane County alone die of traffic related deaths, and traffic accidents are the number one cause of death for teenagers.

Many of these incidents are entirely preventable, she said, by slowing down, wearing seatbelts and not drinking and driving.

The third leading cause is suicide, Cheryl said. She said often people think that young people make up the bulk of suicides, but the largest number of suicides are by white males in the prime of their lives.

She also said that people tend to think of suicide as difficult to prevent, but 90 percent of suicides are related to some type of treatable mental illness such as depression.

Cheryl said the suicide prevention group just held a summit, where they learn a training method, QPR, to help spot warning signs for suicide. QPR stands for question, persuade and refer.

The evidence-based program is taught in an hour-and-a-half session and helps participants recognize the signs and symptoms of depression, among other risk factors.

There are plenty of opportunities for partnerships with Safe Communities, and participation is always welcome, Cheryl said.

Other items:

- Phil Willems said figures for the Rotary in Lights carousel need painting. Any one interested in helping out can do so at Bob Ziegler's house at 306 N. Division St.

- President Lynne Spielman reported that Bob Hoskins is undergoing surgery to treat cancer.

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Calendar of Events:

Thanksgiving breakfast, Nov. 22.

Rotary in Lights, Nov. 26-Jan. 1

Guests: Brent Neevel, guest of Roberta Baumann; Ben Ballweg, guest of Ken Ballweg; Judy Larson, guest of Craig Larson.

Birthdays: Oct. 21, Linda Olson; Oct. 26, Betsy Flanagan; Oct. 29, Lori Derauf.

Anniversaries: Oct. 29, Tom and Joan Laufenberg; Oct. 30, Amy Gile-Enge and John Enge.

Prayers: Oct. 25, Susan Vergeront; Nov. 1, Leonard Allen.

Programs: Oct. 25, Joe Cordova, Wisconsin Division of Public Health; Nov. 1, Club Assembly.

Greeters: Oct. 25, Ed Endres, Rex Endres; Nov. 1, Gary Epping, William Erickson.

See you next week!

Make up meetings online

It's easy to make up a meeting on the Internet. The site is www.rotaryclubone.org. Print out the form and give it to Phil Willems, the club secretary.