

Ridge Road Run for Suicide Prevention: Why They Ran

By Amy Byrnes

The weather Sunday morning was one big metaphor for the way the Ridge Road Run provides shelter and support to friends and families impacted by suicide. The day started out dreary until the skies opened up, releasing a deluge of rain that forced participants to seek cover inside their cars or Red Bank Regional High School, where the second annual race was held May 19.

The start time was pushed back 15 minutes to 8:45 a.m., and by the time walkers and runners made their way to the start line, the rain had stopped and the skies began to clear, with the sun peeking out from time to time. According to its organizers, the race attracted 1,421 participants and raised about \$65,000 to benefit local mental health programs.

We spoke with some of those who came out to walk or run to ask them why they were there, and here's what they had to say:



"We are running for my son, Sean, who passed away on January 23. He was an awesome kid – the kindest, sweetest, most generous kid – who was always there for everybody else. I'm here with my husband, Stephen, and Sean's siblings, Jake and Colleen. We have 235 registered team members and have been overwhelmed with the outpouring of support."

–Eileen Culley, 52, Brick from team "#CulleyStrong"

"I've lived right across from RFH since 1980, and my children went there so when I saw this race was on for suicide prevention, I feel very strongly about mental health and I thought immediately, I'll jump in. I also just turned 70 and running is excellent anti-depression medication and I run or exercise every day. I want to get everybody off the screen and out to exercise."

–Ingeborg Perndorfer, 70, Rumson

"A high school friend I grew up with in Washington, D.C., lost his life to this awful disease and I'm here running for him."

I just ran the Boston Marathon for a boy in Shrewsbury (Red Bank Regional High School freshman Ryan Shaughnessy, who was diagnosed with leukemia in September), and raised \$12,000. I'm running today with his dad."

–Tracey McGee, 45, Shrewsbury

"We're running today for Sean Culley who died from suicide in January. He's one of my best friend's brothers. We're excited to get everyone together and support each other. We need to end the stigma (of suicide)."

–Alison Slavick, 27, Manasquan from team "#CulleyStrong"

"I'm running to support suicide prevention and that traumatic experience at RFH that had impacted our town and all the surrounding communities. I think it's important to bring everybody together to raise support and money. It's a good thing, you don't have to really go out that hard, it's just to show your support."

–Kevin Farley, 16, Little Silver

