

# OPINION

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**COMMENTARY | JAMES POST, ASSISTANT EDITOR**

## Public kept in dark about suicides

If your picture of our community was limited to our newspaper or the local evening news broadcast, you might believe that suicide isn't a problem here.

And if you're among the lucky few whose family or circle of friends hasn't been touched by this issue, it might be even easier to believe that.

Working where I do, I can tell you it's a shockingly regular event in the area.

I can't tell you that officially, in the "news" part of the paper, under my byline.

That's because official law enforcement sources refuse to offer any on-the-record comment or confirmation of what happened in these cases.

I'm not looking to create a tabloid. I don't want to publish anyone's name or details of how they died.

But these are our neighbors. When they are lost, we have an obligation to acknowledge that loss and talk about why it happened.

Too often, these are members of our community who have fallen by the wayside — and as a community, we've failed to stop and offer our hand to them.

Instead we've chosen to ignore something that is taking our neighbors away from us, day after day.

It's a myth that ostriches bury their heads in the sand when

they encounter danger.

There's no animal that responds to a threat by willfully ignoring it — except humanity.

By remaining silent in cases of suicide, law enforcement perpetuates a culture in which suicide and mental illness are swept into the shadows.

"Move along, folks," they tell us. "Nothing to see here."

When these suicides happen in public places or draw a large police response, often, the Facebook rumor mill runs wild, and residents believe things are happening in their neighborhoods that nobody is telling them about, things that are being covered up.

They believe that because it's true — even if the rumors that circulate to explain what happened are almost always far from the truth.

That, in turn, prevents an increasingly necessary community conversation on the real problem.

The time for that conversation has long since come.

But we can't have that conversation unless the community understands the scale of the issue.

And that can't happen until they're truthfully informed about what's really taking away their neighbors — one by one.

—James Post is the assistant editor at *The Leader*. He can be reached at [jpost@the-leader.com](mailto:jpost@the-leader.com) or 936-4651, Ext. 370.

**COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA, R-BIG FLATS**

## New health center all about touching lives

Health care will be the fastest-growing occupational field in America for most of the next decade. According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, in its "Occupational Outlook Handbook," healthcare-related employment "is projected to grow 19 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations, adding about 2.3 million new jobs. Healthcare occupations will add more jobs than any other group of occupations."

Among numerous reasons, this growth is the product of an aging population and greater access to health care.

Further, according to the statistics, in 2016 the "median annual wage for healthcare practitioners and technical occupations (such as registered nurses, physicians and surgeons, and dental hygienists)" was "higher than the median annual wage for all occupations in the economy."

All of the above makes last week's ribbon cutting celebrating the phase-one completion of the Corning Community College Health Education Center especially noteworthy. It marks a critical addition to

the long-term quality of health care in Corning and across the Southern Tier region, not to mention the economic and educational benefits the new center will provide.

As noted by many state and local leaders at last week's ceremony, the new center will revitalize the city, increase the availability of housing, attract additional private investment, enhance the local workforce, greatly benefit patients across the region, and so much more.

Earlier this year, the college previewed the new facility by highlighting how it will allow Corning Community College to "lead the way in preparing professionals for an industry ready for growth, innovation, and higher wages. CCC will reinvent healthcare education with revised curricula and a state-of-the-art facility in downtown Corning. The three-floor Health Education Center will serve as the gateway to the College's Spencer Hill campus, fully support the City of Corning's Comprehensive Plan and revitalization effort for the Denison Parkway Streetscape, invigorate the College's nursing program, and open the door for additional academic program opportunities in

the healthcare field."

In short, a modern, state-of-the-art training facility is being placed in the heart of an already-vibrant city to secure a prominent place for the Southern Tier within an industry projected to grow significantly throughout the coming decade.

According to Corning Community College President Dr. Katherine P. Douglas, "The Corning Community College Health Education Center is a superb example of the power of public/private collaboration. With this investment, the College will transform health education, preparing professionals for meaningful and rewarding careers in an industry that is projected to grow by double digits."

The co-chairs of the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), Corning Enterprises President and CEO Tom Tranter and Binghamton University President Harvey Stenger, note that this exciting public-private investment "sends a strong message that Steuben County is a great place in which to do business and is yet another exciting chapter in the regions' economic narrative."

Steuben County Industrial Development Agency

(IDA) Executive Director James Johnson said the agency is "thrilled to be part of this exciting project which will help train the region's next generation of healthcare providers and serve as a cornerstone for future redevelopment efforts in the City of Corning."

Guthrie Corning Hospital President and COO Garrett Hoover added, "The Guthrie Clinic and Guthrie Corning Hospital are proud to be partners of this outstanding project. But this partnership is more than constructing a state-of-the-art educational facility, it's about touching lives. Corning Community College Faculty members will make a meaningful impact by educating our future workforce; future nurses who will provide medical care to people who live, work, and visit in this region. That's the real impact of this project."

Well said. Making a difference in lives is the overriding goal. From creating good jobs to providing a quality education to improving health care, the Corning Community College Health Education Center is going to touch many lives in very meaningful, fundamental, and essential ways.

### ANOTHER VIEW



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