

COMMUNITY

# 'Superheroes' run for life

## Suicide center benefits from annual event

BY JON POMPIA  
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

A true superhero's greatest power is compassion.

In remembrance of those lost to suicide and as a tribute to those who have survived such a loss, Saturday's third Pueblo Suicide Prevention Not on Our Watch 5K Fun Run drew several hundred participants to the Downtown area.

Sponsored by addic-tzathlete, the casual jaunt for a serious cause raised about \$4,500 for the Pueblo Suicide Prevention Center.

The event's superhero theme, according to organizer Rob Archuleta, is a nod to those who work to prevent people from taking their own lives as well as those left to carry on in the wake of the suicide of a family member or loved one.

And whether Wonder Woman, Batman, Iron Man, Captain America or Spider-Man, every superhero has a story.

Like Emily Sanchez, the Dolores Huerta Preparatory High school basketball coach who lost one of her players, Leticia "Weda" Salinas, to suicide in March. In honor of Salinas, Sanchez wore a T-shirt emblazoned with a logo designed by Salinas and around her neck, a sign that said "For Weda #15," with two pictures of the hoops standout.

"We never saw it com-



CHIEFTAIN PHOTOS/JOHN JAQUES

Costumed participants warm up before the start of the Pueblo Suicide Prevention Not on Our Watch 5K Fun Run near the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk of Pueblo on Saturday.

ing," Sanchez said of Salinas' death. "It came out of the blue. It shows that suicide is something people struggle with and sometimes nobody knows it."

Or Isaac Montoya, running with his wife, four children and father-in-law in memory of his brother-in-law Tony, whose suicide four years ago tore a desolating hole in the family fabric.

"It was very sudden, very shocking," Montoya said. "Tony was a good, hard-working man. It devastated all of us, especially my sister, niece and nephew."

Montoya said only through "a lot of prayer and depending on each

other" has the family been able to work through the tragedy.

In more ways than one, support was the key word of the day.

"Events like this are so important to us," said Kristie Dorwart, director of the Pueblo Suicide Prevention Center. "It helps us keep programming alive and going."

Through training and other programs offered by the center, Dorwart said she believes the community at large is becoming more aware of suicide, especially ways to prevent it.

Seriousness of the cause aside, those taking part managed to remember it was a "fun" run. How else to explain participants recreating characters from the prison-based television program "Orange is the New Black?"

Or mimicking a Middle Eastern sheik.

"I'm trying to figure out how to run in a dress, Arab style," said Erik Segall as he adjusted his traditional flowing cloak, accented by a headdress.

Segall is one of the many volunteers who staff the PSPC's 24-hour hotline.

"We not only take calls from Pueblo but throughout the state, and sometimes the country," Segall said. "These people can't tell other people their problems so they call us."

"These are people in pain, in crisis. Many are from small towns and feel isolated. We get a lot of tough calls but we are there to listen, to get them through the night and then come up with a plan to help them stay safe."

All hotline volunteers go through an initial 40



Kimberly Leach (left) and her son Jonah Leach walk in the Pueblo Suicide Prevention Not on Our Watch 5K Fun Run on Saturday.

hours of training, complemented by continuing education. And more are always needed.

"It's that 'thank you' at the end of the call that makes it all worth it," Segall said. "I'd like to encourage more people to volunteer."

"Suicide is preventable," Dorwart added. "That's the message we want to get out."

The PSPC can be reached at 564-6642. The 24-hour hotline can be accessed by calling 800-784-TALK (8255).  
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