

Out of the Darkness Overnight Walk

On June 27th-28th The Adler Team participated in the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's *Out of the Darkness Overnight Walk*. The Overnight was an 18-mile walk from sunset to sunrise that started at Chicago's Soldier Field and wound north along Lake Michigan and then west and south through many Chicago neighborhoods before returning to its starting point.

The purpose of the event was to raise money to fund vital suicide prevention programs and help end stigma by bringing the issue of suicide and mental illness out of the darkness. Every 16 minutes in the U.S. someone dies by suicide, and this year more than one in 12 teenagers will attempt suicide. Depression is the leading cause of suicide; unfortunately, although more than 20 million people suffer from depression each year, many never seek treatment, often because they have no insurance or funds to pay for it, or lack knowledge about its symptoms. The Overnight brings together friends, family members and loved ones whose lives have been touched by suicide or depression, giving a voice to issues that have previously been kept in silence and an opportunity to reflect and share with others touched by this tragedy.

The Adler Team's members included Dr. Janna Henning (Team Captain; Adler Core Faculty), Dr. Felix Casados (Staff Psychologist, Advanced Behavioral Solutions), Jessica Garfield (recent Adler MAC/Substance Abuse Counseling Certificate graduate), Sara Pflueger (recent Adler MAC/ Substance Abuse Counseling Certificate graduate), Tim Steach (current Adler MAF/ Substance Abuse Counseling Certificate/Group Psychotherapy Concentration student), and Avriel Weston (current Adler MAF student).



From Left to Right: Tim Steach, Patrick Steele, Felix Casados, Janna Henning, Jessica Garfield, Sara Pflueger

As students, therapists, and teachers representing an organization committed to training socially responsible practitioners, we sought out this opportunity in order to learn more about this issue and the profound impact it has had on so many lives. With determined effort by the Adler Team members and the generosity of our donors, we raised over \$7,300. The total amount earned by all event participants exceeded \$2 million, which went to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to fund research, education, and survivor and awareness programs to prevent suicide and assist those affected by suicide.

The Adler Team walked alongside 1,800 other participants, and interacted with countless crew and support volunteers who offered us abundant snacks and beverages, cheered us on, and checked on our physical and emotional well-being throughout the long night. Check-in was brisk and efficient, and the team was then directed to booths where we were invited to write personal memorial messages for lost loved ones or encouragement to survivors on white bags that would be transformed into luminaries at the end of the route. Participants were also invited to wear necklaces of colored beads to symbolize losses they have experienced due to suicide (gold for the loss of a parent; white for the loss of a child; red for the loss of a spouse; orange for the loss of a sibling, etc.). There were also green beads to symbolize a personal struggle with depression or suicide, and blue beads to show support for all who have been affected by it.

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