

Americanisms



“Acting in “Star Wars”
I felt like a raisin in a
giant fruit salad, and I
didn’t even know who
the cantaloupes were.”
— *Mark Hamill*

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Americanisms



“They say marriages are
made in Heaven. But so is
thunder and lightning.”
— *Clint Eastwood*

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Story Unfinished: Powell County Confronts Suicide With Hope

By LISA JOHNSON -- Clay City News

Stanton, Kentucky — At Powell County Lions Club Park, the community recently came together for an event called **“Story Unfinished,”** a day devoted to suicide awareness and prevention. Organized by Christina Smith in honor of her son, Gage, who died by suicide nearly two years ago, the gathering turned a place of everyday recreation into a space of remembrance, resilience, and hope.

The event featured live music, food trucks, face painting, a butterfly release, a “hope wall,” and a large memorial banner where friends and families could write the names of loved ones lost to suicide. For Smith, it was a way to transform grief into action, ensuring her son’s story lives on by helping others choose life. **“Story Unfinished is my love for Gage poured into something that can help others hold on,”** she said.

A Crisis Close to Home

Suicide is not a distant issue for Kentucky or for Powell County. According to the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, Powell County recorded **11 suicides among non-veteran residents between 2018 and mid-2024**, averaging one to two per year. Because of the county’s small size, exact youth numbers are suppressed to protect privacy. Still, the statewide picture is sobering: **in 2023, 29 Kentucky youths ages 6–17 died by suicide**, and nearly **1,600 young people sought hospital care** for intentional self-harm.

National surveys show that nearly **1 in 5 high school students in Kentucky** has seriously considered suicide in the past year, and about **1 in 10 has attempted it**. Experts say that numbers like these demand attention, especially in rural Appalachian counties where economic hardship, isolation, and lack of mental-health resources make prevention more difficult.

What Drives Youth Suicide?

Suicide is complex, rarely caused by a single factor. For some young people, it stems from untreated depression or anxiety, bullying — including cyberbullying — or family struggles. For others, it can happen suddenly in moments of despair, especially when firearms or medications are easily accessible.

Social media and video games often raise questions for parents. While most teens use these platforms harmlessly, evidence shows that **cyberbullying, late-night screen use, and exposure to harmful content online can increase risks**. Still, researchers stress that it is the combination of emotional pain, social pressures, and access to lethal means that most often leads to tragedy.

A Community’s Role in Prevention

Events like Story Unfinished show that local communities can be powerful allies in prevention. By providing safe spaces to talk openly about grief and mental health, they chip away at stigma and remind young people that they are not alone.

Protective steps are proven to help

- **Safe storage of firearms and medications** — locked, unloaded, and out of reach.
- **Connection and belonging** at home, school, church, and in activities.
- **Open conversations** where adults ask directly about suicidal thoughts and listen without judgment.
- **Quick access to help** — through schools, counselors, pastors, and hotlines.

Resources That Save Lives

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** — Call or text 988, available 24/7.
- **Crisis Text Line** — Text HOME to 741741 for support by text.
- **Foothills Health & Wellness Center** (Clay City) and New Vista in Stanton offer local mental health services.
- Powell County schools, family resource centers, and churches remain key first points of connection for struggling youth and families.

A Call To Action

Suicide should never be dismissed as “just talk.” Every threat, every expression of hopelessness, must be taken seriously. “As a child growing up, many of us said, ‘I’ll kill myself,’ without meaning it. But today, kids too often act on it quietly,” one community member reflected. “It’s up to us to listen when they whisper they don’t want tomorrow.”

Powell County’s Story Unfinished event serves as a poignant reminder that, even in the face of grief, we can choose connection, compassion, and prevention. By working together — families, schools, churches, neighbors — we can help ensure that every child’s story continues, unfinished only because life still lies ahead.

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EXECUTRIX: Terri B. Freeman, 1125 Harris Ferry Road,
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DATE APPTD: 08-11-2025

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Notice to Creditor

ESTATE OF: Robert Justin Riddell Published 08/20/25
EXECUTRIX: Chasity Lynn King
DATE APPTD: 08-15-2025
ATTORNEY: Hon. Michael Fore, P.O. Box 726,
Richmond, KY 40476

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