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## Active Minds Aims to Reduce Campus Suicides

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## Active Minds Aims to Reduce Campus Suicides

Student-led group sponsors UM exhibition promoting the importance of mental health

MARCH 8, 2019 BY EDWIN B. SMITH

FaTvLiErCsMPrSr



A student reads one of the suicide stories attached to a donated backpack during the 'Send Silence Packing' exhibition on the Ole Miss campus in 2018. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – A national traveling exhibit designed to raise awareness of mental health is coming to the **University of Mississippi** on March 19.

The “**Send Silence Packing**” display, containing more than 1,000 backpacks, will be in the Grove that day. The backpacks, each with a story attached, represent the number of college students lost to suicide each year.

The program is designed to raise awareness about the incidence and impact of suicide, connect students to needed mental health resources and inspire action for suicide prevention.

“The goal of this event is to decrease the stigma surrounding mental health on our campus and in our community,” said Katherine Sistrunk, a senior public policy leadership and pre-nursing student from Springfield, Missouri, and board chairman for the event. “Mental health affects everybody in some shape or form, and we want people to know that it is OK to ask for help.”

Hosted by the national **Active Minds** organization, “Send Silence Packing” annually visits 30-40 schools and communities. The all-day exhibit raises mental health awareness, inspires action for suicide prevention, connects viewers to mental health resources and jump-starts action.

The Ole Miss chapter of Active Minds hosted the display for the first time last spring.

“‘Send Silence Packing’ contributes to a community’s overall positive climate for mental health and encourages people to seek out helpful resources for themselves, friends or loved ones,” Sistrunk said. “Active Minds staff and volunteers are on hand at each stop and are equipped to discuss the importance of knowing the signs of suicide, intervening when a friend is in distress and getting help for themselves when needed.”

Trained professionals from the national Active Minds organization are onsite at every display. All signs and materials encourage help-seeking, many referrals are made, and thousands of mental health resources are distributed at each location.

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OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates’

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OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve’s

The Active Minds chapter also is hosting Mental Health Awareness Week March 25-29 to promote conversations about the importance of mental health and well-being.

"We will be bringing back the Humans of Ole Miss event, which allows people in our campus community to share their stories in hopes of inspiring others to find help for themselves or a loved one," Sistrunk said. "We are also planning on hosting a speaker on campus and are partnering with Phi Delta Theta Fraternity for the second year in a row in hosting a basketball fundraiser on Business Row that was extremely successful last year."

Other activities planned include Yoga in the Grove and partnering with Garrow's Garden, a local florist, for a flower giveaway.

Active Minds is a national organization, founded in 2003 by Alison Malmon, who was a junior at the University of Pennsylvania. She lost her brother to suicide and wanted to implement a way for college campuses to reduce the stigma of mental illness and encourage students who need help to seek it out.

More than 400 chapters of the organization have been created on college campuses. Active Minds has been at Ole Miss for three years.

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