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State of Oregon  
Youth Suicide Awareness Day  
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Carrying October 9th Beyond The Date; Advocating For Youth Suicide Awareness  
October 9th is a day that will forever be a day replayed in my memory. It's the day I lost my childhood friend Mikalynn to suicide. Her passing was a devastating shock, and it's taken me a long time to process my emotions and still to this day don't know how to even feel. Mikalynn was one of those people who radiated laughter and shined like light, but beneath the surface, she was fighting a battle that none of us could see.

Her loss has had a large impact on my life. It's made me realize that you never know what beasts someone may be battling inside. I've experienced a shift in how I view others, and I've become more aware of the importance of mental health. Mikalynn's passing has taught me to prioritize my own mental health and to seek support when I need it.

But Mikalynn's story is not the end of the list. Unfortunately, I've been affected by suicide throughout my life. My grandfather passed away before I was born, and his loss has had a lasting impact on my family still to this day. Despite the pain and sadness, I've come to realize that these experiences have given me a unique perspective on life. They've taught me to cherish every moment and every relationship.

As I've navigated the everyday choices of life, I've come to realize that youth suicide is a growing concern. It's a mentality that tells us that we're not enough, that we're a burden, or that we're alone. It's a mentality that's perpetuated by societies pressures, social media, and the stigma surrounding anyone's mental health.

We live in a world where we're constantly connected, yet we're more disconnected and unattached than ever. We're afraid to show vulnerability, to admit that we're struggling, or to ask for help. We're afraid of being judged, labeled, or rejected. But the truth is, we're all struggling. We're all fighting battles that nobody else can see. The youth suicide mentality is a complex issue, and it requires a multifaceted approach. We need to create a culture of understanding and support, where people feel comfortable talking about their mental health. We need to break the stigma surrounding mental illness and encourage people to seek help when they need it. We need to educate ourselves and others about the warning signs of suicide, and we need to be proactive in reaching out to those who may be struggling, big or small, they all matter. We need to create safe spaces for people to talk about their feelings, and we need to listen without judgment.

That's why I'm advocating for the state of Oregon to declare October 9th as a day of awareness for youth suicide. I believe that by dedicating a day to this important issue, we can raise awareness and spark important conversations that we need to face. We can encourage people to share their stories, to listen to others, and to seek support when they need it.

We should work together to create a world where people feel comfortable talking about their mental health. Let's honor the memories of those we've lost by being the kind of people who never let another person suffer in silence again. Let's break the stigma surrounding mental illness and create a culture of understanding and support. Together, we can make a difference.

Thank you and God bless,

Lillie Brooks

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