

Friends, family remember MU student in candlelight vigil



COLUMBIA — Family and friends remembered Kelly White's selfless spirit, joyful personality and wild heart at a candlelight vigil Wednesday at Tradition's Plaza at MU.

Her mother, Kim Silverberg, spoke at the vigil dressed in turquoise and purple — the colors of the national suicide prevention ribbon.

White, an MU student, died by suicide on Sept. 10. She was 20.

She spoke of White's strong faith and bright personality, but she also talked about her daughter's years struggling with and seeking help for her diagnosed anxiety and depression.

"There's a lot of young people that suffer with anxiety and depression," Silverberg said. "For one brief moment, (Kelly) lost hope."

Suicide was the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 35 and the 10th overall leading cause of death in 2013, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Each year, more than 41,000 people die by suicide in the United States — more than twice the homicide rate.

As many as 90 percent of individuals who complete suicide suffer from some form of mental illness, [according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).

At the vigil, White's longtime friend Stephen Petralia encouraged the 150 people in attendance to speak up and seek help.

"This is no joke. I really want to say that," he said. "Losing Kelly has hurt me more than you could possibly imagine."

Other friends shared memories of laughs, pranks, lunches at Ingredient in downtown Columbia and parties back at home in Ballwin, Missouri.

White's freshman roommate, Maylisa Pavez, told stories about living in Lathrop Hall. Pavez recalled how White recruited a "bunch of boys" to help Pavez move in, because her arm was in a sling.

She remembered how the decorations in their room looked out of place, since the girls were nearly "polar opposites."

"She's a country girl; she likes cowgirl boots and pearls. I like Vans," Pavez said.

Despite their different tastes, White was willing to go out of her way to share food and a laugh with her roommate.

"Even when she had her bad days, she always put other people first," Pavez said.

Silverberg ended the vigil encouraging people to participate in the [Out of the Darkness Walk on Oct. 9 at Stephens Lake Park](#) in White's honor.

Sidebar:

If you need help

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: [800-273-8255](tel:800-273-8255)

Missouri Behavioral Health Response Hotline: [314-469-6644](tel:314-469-6644)

Missouri Department of Mental Health Access Crisis Intervention Hotline: [800-395-2132](tel:800-395-2132). It offers:

- Offers 24-hour live response
- Provides face-to-face on-site crisis stabilization
- Next day appointments
- Inpatient Crisis Services
- 23-hour observation beds

Supervising editor is [Ellen Cagle](#).

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