

Get your local daily news, special offers & more delivered right to your inbox!
SIGN UP NOW >

http://www.cullmantimes.com/news/year-in-review-no-county-suicides-on-the-rise-while/article_5d824dba-e779-11e7-a676-2b1a27ca6eee.html

FEATURED

Year in Review (No. 9) County suicides on the rise while mental health care lags behind

David Palmer Dec 23, 2017



A standoff with police ended in the death of a Cullman man in February, after he allegedly set fire to the Larkwood home where he had barricaded himself. Cullman Police Chief Kenny Culpepper said police were familiar with the man, whose ongoing mental issues had brought him into contact with law enforcement repeatedly.

Benjamin Bullard | The Cullman Times



[f](#) [t](#) [G+](#) [in](#) [p](#) @

[Year in Review \(No. 8\) Winston County losing hospital, Cullman Regional expanding](#)





Year in Review (No. 7) Avian influenza threatens local poultry

Editor's Note

The Cullman Times is counting down to the top local story of 2017.

Number 9: Suicides rise as mental health care facilities close.

A growing number of suicides in Cullman County has become an alarming issue that reflects what many local leaders feel is a failure by the state to restore and increase funding for mental health services.

Most of the suicides have been men, many in the prime of their lives in the 1-36 age group. By the close of the first month of 2017, six people's deaths in Cullman County were ruled suicides.

In 2016, 15 total suicides were recorded, and 13 of those were males, according to Coroner Jeremy Kilpatrick. But 2017 saw the rate nearly double.

Determining what led to the suicides is varied and difficult. Hangings, gunshot wounds and drug overdoses have been the causes of death, but the issues in those people's lives ranged post-traumatic stress disorder to family problems, untreated mental health issues and drugs and alcohol, Kilpatrick said.

Mental Healthcare of Cullman Director Chris Van Dyke also notes that the problems leading to suicide vary, but he is among those who are troubled that the state of Alabama has left only one hospital — Bryce — for intensive treatment of mental health patients who are non-criminals.

Finding a bed for intensive, longterm care is frustrating because of the shutdown of hospitals and diminished funding, which leaves people on the streets who need medical attention, Van Dyke said.

This also has put more pressure on law enforcement.

Year in Review (No. 6) Effects of drought linger, local agencies help farmers feed cattle

Year in Review (No. 5) Former county commission chairman charged with felony sex abuse



Year in Review (No. 4) State and national events hit close to home

Cullman Police Chief Kenny Culpepper said officers are increasingly running into situations that are challenging and potentially deadly.

“Some of the people we see need to be in treatment, but there is nowhere to go. This leaves their families stressed and trying to cope and then at times have to call on law enforcement,” Culpepper said. “We’re learning more about how we should react, but some of these situations wouldn’t occur if the state did a better job of funding mental health.”

Van Dyke’s organization recently merged with Huntsville Mental Health in an effort to gain more access to grants and assistance for Cullman County. But he, along with law enforcement officials such as Culpepper, are encouraging people to lobby lawmakers to look more closely at the funding needs in mental health.

Year in Review (No. 3) U.S. Highway 278 road work creates changes — and headaches

Year in Review (No. 2) Steve Griffith's death a loss to family, friends, and Cullman community

Year in Review (No.10) Chaney accused of violating state ethics law for appointing son cases

Year in Review (No. 1) Business growth surges across area



+ Follow

Share

Post comment as...

Newest | Oldest

[Karla Jayne Young](#) from Facebook

Dec 25, 2017

Mental health has long been a standing issue. Currently I work with and serve with survivors of trauma and PTSD sufferers. The help given and the help that actually helps is difficult to navigate and difficult to find. There are so many serious issues that need to be addressed that I don't even know when, where, and how to start the description. And this is just in my own eyes and opinion. All I know is that when people can't find help, they seek an escape. It's not that a sufferer typically wants to die, it's just that they don't want to live.. There are way more contributing factors than one or two things..

Like Reply

[LaTonya Capps Boike](#) from Facebook

Dec 23, 2017

You can thank Obamacare for this issue.

Like Reply

[Chris Brewer](#) from Facebook

Dec 23, 2017

Why would anyone want the same government that's responsible for the concrete dividers on 278 to be in charge of the mental healthcare for the county or city?

Like Reply

margerry777

Dec 23, 2017

As a parent of a mentally/emotionally ill now 29 year old man, I can't tell you how frustrating it is to watch the train wreck of what has become my sons life. Law enforcement has been his care givers off and on since he became an adult. He has been without treatment since he became an adult.He is his own worst enemy and I have no advice to give him that will work without professional treatment available. I have lost hope, but need to hide that from he who has lost all hope. Nothing is offered anywhere in Alabama for men like him.Please if you care about a person in need of help, make noise to our local politicians... write them , call them , email them make this an issue that needs addressing now not later. What people do for the least of us they do for Jesus. If not for them do it for Christ and make a young man whole again.Merry Christmas to all. Thank-you CPD and Cullman times for bringing this issue out in the light.

Like Reply

[Kristie Walker Hogeland](#) from Facebook

Dec 23, 2017

Cullman mental health is a joke need to get people in there that actually care not a bunch of liars that could care less

Like Reply

[Brian Ramsey](#) from Facebook

Dec 23, 2017

Not surprised. So sad.

Like Reply

This Week's Circulars

PETSMART
for the love of pets
January 3-15, 2019

your puppy place

sale
\$14.99
10¢ per pad
while stock this floor (dog pads, 95)

congratulations puppy parent!

Hover for **Circular**

Advance Auto Parts

OIL CHANGE SPECIALS

\$29.99
5 Quarts of Castrol Edge® Full Synthetic High Mileage Motor Oil AND Air Filter

\$34.99
4-Quart Special Also Available

PREMIUM QUALITY OIL AT A GREAT PRICE

\$19.99
5 Quarts of Castrol Conventional Motor Oil AND Air Filter

\$21.99
5 Quarts of Castrol High Mileage Motor Oil AND Air Filter

\$29.99
5 Quarts of Castrol Edge® Full Synthetic High Mileage Motor Oil AND Air Filter

\$23.99
5 Quarts of Castrol GTX High Mileage Motor Oil AND Air Filter

Hover for **Circular**

FAMILY DOLLAR

GET INTO THE GAME with these great deals!

RED BARON Classic Crust
3 for **\$10**

Sprite Diet
3 for **\$9**

Coca-Cola Products
3 for **\$9**

PEPSI Next Gen
3 for **\$3**

WOW! 1 for **\$1**
Foam Cups

WOW! 1 for **\$1**
Household Items

WOW! 1 for **\$1**
Foam Paper

Hover for **Circular**

Powered by

Cullman Times Events

- THU 11** **Electric Jam**
Cullman, AL
- FRI 12** **Cullman Senior Center Gospel Sin...**
Cullman, AL
- FRI 12** **Jackson Capps**
Elks Lodge 1609 | Cullman, AL
- SAT 13** **Unmasked #RealWoman #RealPur...**
Cullman, AL

	WED 10	THU 11	FRI 12	SAT 13	SUN 14	MON 15
--	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

[See all events](#) [+ Add your event](#)

David Palmer

David Palmer has decades of experience in the newspaper industry. He currently serves as editor of The Cullman Times.