

COUNTY OF KANE



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Kane County Health Department Observes National Gun Violence Awareness Day and Wear Orange Weekend

(6/6/24) The Kane County Health Department (KCHD) joins communities nationwide in recognizing National Gun Violence Awareness Day. This annual event, observed on the first Friday in June, honors victims and survivors of gun violence and highlights the need for preventative measures to reduce gun-related tragedies. The Kane County Board first passed the proclamation in 2022, establishing this day to raise awareness and foster community action against gun violence.

National Gun Violence Awareness Day is a call to action for the community to engage in efforts to reduce gun violence through awareness, advocacy, and education and is a reminder of the devastating impact of gun violence, with over 40,000 Americans killed by gun violence each year. In 2022, there were a total of 31 Kane County resident deaths due to firearms.

“We are taking a public health approach to preventing death and injury from gun violence,” said Michael Isaacson, KCHD Executive Director. “This involves understanding and addressing the root causes of violence, promoting safe environments, and working with community organizations to implement programs that reduce risk factors.”

This approach emphasizes prevention, community engagement, and collaboration across sectors. Kaitlin Soriano, KCHD’s Violence Prevention Coordinator states, "Our goal is to save lives and to create better futures and safer communities where violence is less likely to occur in the first place."

Since August 2023, KCHD has distributed 3,025 gun locks to promote safe firearm storage, a critical step in preventing accidental shootings, gun violence, gun thefts, and suicides. Safe firearm storage is a cornerstone of KCHD’s violence prevention strategy, helping to ensure that firearms do not fall into the wrong hands. Other initiatives include:

- Partnering with local organizations to expand free gun lock distribution. Residents can obtain locks at various distribution locations throughout Kane County. For more information and to find a distribution location, visit: <https://kanehealth.com/Pages/Violence-Prevention.aspx>
- Project Safe Aurora is a coalition led by KCHD and involving multiple area organizations dedicated to fostering gun violence awareness, building community bridges, and advocating for systemic changes to protect and uplift every resident of Aurora. The coalition aims to intertwine safety and health through research, community collaboration, and innovative approaches. For more information about Project Safe Aurora, visit: <https://www.kanehealth.com/Pages/Violence-Prevention.aspx>

- KCHD prioritizes community engagement, and invites the public to visit us at Aurora's First Fridays event on June 7 at Water St. Mall from 5pm to 9pm. Pledge support for a future free from gun violence, pick up a free gun lock and naloxone, and learn about Project Safe Aurora.
- Wear Orange Weekend honors gun violence survivors and builds community with those working to end gun violence. To find Wear Orange events near you, visit <https://act.everytown.org/event/wear-orange-weekend/search/>. This movement began in tribute to Hadiya Pendleton, a young girl tragically shot and killed in 2013, and symbolizes the value of human life.

One of the notable members of Project Safe Aurora is Challenge II Change, an organization that provides services to system-impacted individuals and empowers community members at high risk of becoming system-impacted to use practical strategies to change or modify their behavior. This leads to more positive feelings and thoughts, creating safer communities one challenge at a time. "Our goal is to transform lives by addressing the root causes of behavior and providing the tools for meaningful change," says Javier Reyes, CEO of Challenge II Change. "By doing so, we can contribute to a reduction in violence and increase community safety."