

Salem Health Wellness Resource Fair – 7/11/23

Ann S. Kelly, Founder/Director

Hands & Words Are Not For Hurting Project®

It is an honor to be here today to bring you good news about the one thing we can all do to help stop hurting ourselves and each other with words and actions. The Hands & Words Are Not For Hurting Project®, our nonprofit education organization, began here in Salem with our hospital and the Salem-Keizer Public Schools in 1997...26 years ago! Some of you here may have learned the Pledge in school or have seen our signs around the Emergency Department, Family Birth Center and other places around the hospital.

We believe education is the light in the darkness and the voice that breaks the silence! Our way of standing up to all forms of abuse is to take our 14-word Purple Hands Pledge to heart: *“I Will Not Use My Hands Or My Words For Hurting Myself Or Others®”* These 14 words teach empathy, self-control, respect for self and others and accountability for our words and actions that either help or hurt.

Ours is a public health approach to a public health crisis. The dramatic rise in all forms of abuse (bullying, domestic and family violence, child abuse, gun violence, self-harm, and suicide) demonstrates the need to educate at the earliest ages that *anger is a feeling; abuse and violence is always a choice.*

Why is the Hand Purple? The hand is not black, it's not white, its not brown it is Purple!

A Purple Hand with a Red Heart Embedded in the Palm represents all people as one, is inclusive regardless of skin color, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or nationality. We are all different on the outside!

The Color Purple is our national color used to honor and remember victims and survivors of abuse and violence. Those who are no longer with us, victims of suicide and murder, and those who are suffering in silence... afraid to ask for help. The Purple Heart*...our Nation's oldest medal of honor is awarded to men and women wounded or killed in combat. We honor their service and their sacrifice with our Purple Hands!

Why is a Heart in the middle of the palm?

The Red Heart in the palm of the hand serves to represent when you hurt yourself or another person, or someone hurts you with words or by actions, it hurts deep inside, it hurts your heart, it hurts your spirit. We are all alike on the inside... Empathy

Why do we teach and take the PH Pledge? Here's why: because We are All Valuable Irreplaceable Human Beings!

Repetition is how we learn everything...how to read, write, ride a bike, this is not a one-time thing! Practice makes Permanent! Not perfect...when we forget, and we will as imperfect human beings...take it again and aspire to live by it. Take this Pledge with your family. Trace your hand on purple paper, sign your name in your handprint and put it in a prominent place in your home, lead the way for your family, friends and co-workers to take these 14 words to heart! If your kids are learning the Purple Hands Pledge in school, thank their teachers! Thank their counselors, their principals, whoever is leading them to learn this. Day after day. Year after year.

Please raise your right hand and repeat after me:

I will not... use my hands...or my words...for hurting myself...or others®!

Taking this 14-word Pledge to heart is for the health and well-being of our community! That is what you do here, every single day and night 24/7- 365 days a year!

I want to leave you with a quote written by Dolly Parton... Y'all know Dolly, right? Everybody knows Dolly: "Butterflies are colorful and bright and gentle have no way to harm you". I love her simple and beautiful description of how she sees butterflies! Our Purple Hands Pledges displayed in schools, homes and community organizations are just like butterflies, colorful, bright and gentle and have no way to harm you. Just seeing them, like butterflies, makes people happy.

Thank you from my Heart!!

Please visit us at our table and log on to our website where you will be inspired to continue this 26-year Journey. We have to do this for our Kids, Grandkids, everybody! Thank you very much!