

Impact SPOTLIGHT

August 2026, Issue 7

Bringing Communities Together to Raise Funds and Awareness – The Impact of Out of the Darkness™ Community Walks

The Challenge

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. Many people's introduction to AFSP comes through Out of the Darkness™ Walks, taking place in cities and counties nationwide. Through our Community Walks, those affected by suicide – and those who support them – raise much-needed funds and awareness, sending the message that suicide can be prevented, and that no one is alone.

Out of the Darkness Community Walks bring together friends, family, and supporters in communities nationwide. Learn more at afsp.org/walks.

Measuring impact – by collecting and leveraging data in strategic and thoughtful ways – plays a critical role in ensuring that we achieve real results with the actions we take, programs we produce, and partnerships and initiatives we embark on in our quest to prevent suicide and provide support to those affected.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Impact Spotlight series takes a look at some of the ways we're making a true difference in communities everywhere.



Key Takeaways

1. Over 194,000 people participated in nearly 400 Community Walks across the country in 2025.
2. Most walkers feel Community Walks honor their loss while providing support and would recommend the events to others.
3. Nearly all walkers intend to continue engaging with AFSP after the Community Walk.



Taking Action

Together with our chapter network, AFSP conducted a robust evaluation of Community Walks to assess the events' reach and impact across the country.

Using data collected from events in fall 2025, our evaluation helped us to:

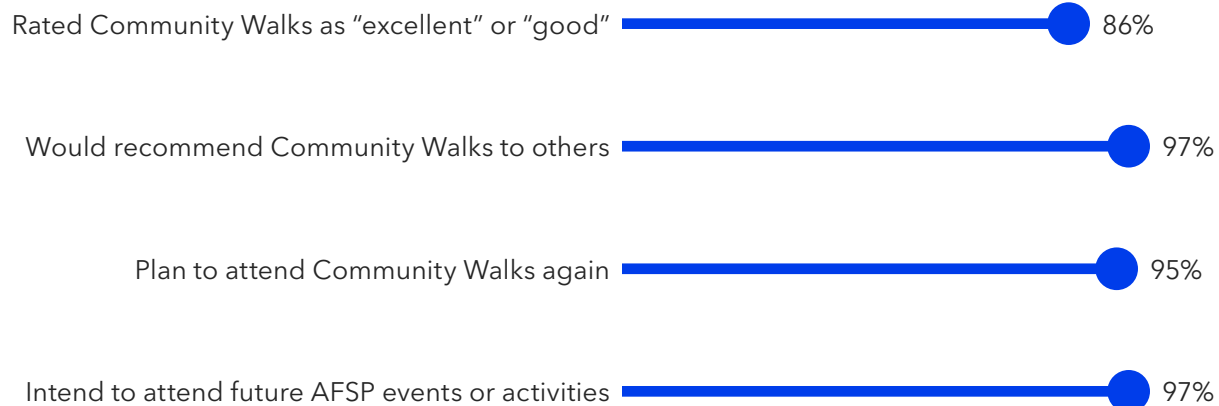
- Assess the effectiveness of Community Walks to increase recognition of the issue of suicide, foster a sense of hope and community, and inspire continued engagement with AFSP
- Use feedback to improve future events

By implementing a comprehensive nationwide evaluation strategy, we ensure our Out of the Darkness Walks are meeting community needs and reaching intended audiences.

Who Was Involved

194,368 walkers participated in 386 Community Walks from September to November 2025. Over a quarter (28%) of survey respondents were new to AFSP, reporting that they were not aware of AFSP before the Community Walk (N=4,120).

Nearly all respondents rated their experience positively and would recommend the events to others (N=3,800).



52%

of respondents were returning participants, including 28% who had attended four or more previous Community Walks (N=4,120).

66% of respondents were ages 35-64

83% of respondents were women

55% of respondents had a Bachelor's degree or higher

Note: 'N' refers to the total number of people who responded to that question.

What We Found

In our evaluation, we found that Community Walks help to bolster recognition of the issue of suicide, **foster a sense of hope and community**, and inspire continued engagement with AFSP among walkers.

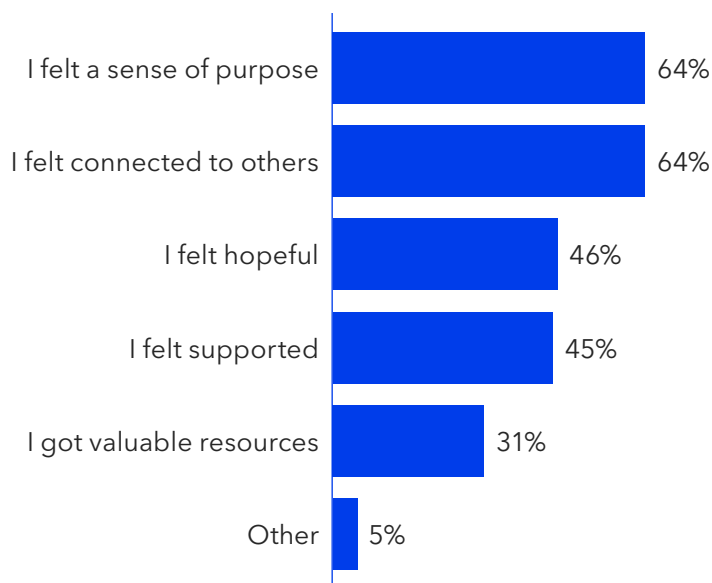
After attending Community Walks, **99% of walkers who provided feedback felt that suicide is a significant issue** (N=3,895).

89%

of walkers felt Community Walks strike the balance of honoring loss while showing support and providing resources (N=4,055).

Most respondents (93%) felt they were “part of a community” after participating in Community Walks (N=3,877).

When asked what they’re taking away from the event*, walkers reported:



*Respondents could select multiple responses.

Walkers described Community Walks as impactful:



“I’m grateful AFSP creates a space where **families can honor loved ones** and support each other.”



“It’s always powerful **connecting with other loss survivors** and sharing our resources.”



“It was a beautiful experience to **be a part of something** that I believe we need more of in this world today.”



“Thank you! I’m **really grateful** to have found the walk and your organization.”

What Comes Next

Building on these findings, Community Walks will continue to be strengthened by:

1. Continuing to build consistent events nationwide to ensure Community Walks foster hope, healing, and connection.
2. Promoting the Community Walk feedback survey to collect useful data.
3. Providing resources for walkers to support team building and fundraising.