

The Telegraph

It's Your Community.

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.nashuatelegraph.com

To print this article if a print dialogue does not open automatically, open the File menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Published: Friday, October 16, 2015

Riv's 'Fresh Check' the right approach

Sept. 3: One dead and two injured at Sacramento City College in Sacramento, Calif.

Sept. 14: One dead at Delta State University in Cleveland, Miss.

Oct. 1: Nine dead and nine injured at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Ore.

Oct. 9: One dead and one injured at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas.

Oct. 9: One dead and three injured at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Ariz.

Those are the just the latest of the 23 shootings on college campuses this year through the beginning of October as compiled by the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, a non-partisan group working to reduce gun violence. And that's just colleges.

You're forgiven if schools like Bethuen-Cookman University and Community College of Beaver County don't ring a bell, if you don't recall headlines about the murders at schools like Everett Community College and Johnson C. Smith University because the senseless slaughter has become so terrifyingly routine most have given up keeping track.

The shootings at schools across the country have almost literally become a weekly occurrence. Everytown calculates that since 2013, there have been at least - at least - 150 school shootings in America.

Much can and has been said about the role that casual availability of guns in this country plays in these tragedies. But what's talked about less is the role mental illness plays.

It's that factor that makes events like the one held at Rivier University last week so vital.

The college hosted a "Fresh Check Day" Oct. 10, a sort of fair designed by the Jordan Matthew Proco Memorial Foundation to help reduce the stigma that somehow still surrounds mental illness, teach ways to cope with stress and mental health conditions, and offer free screenings to students who just need a little help.

"It's about reducing the stigma around mental health, and making it something you can talk about," said Pamela Graesser, Rivier's director of counseling and wellness.

Dozens of Rivier students turned out for the event, where they tossed darts at balloons filled with paint and suspended over a white canvas as part of an art therapy exercise and participated in interactive booths for things like yoga, meditation, depression screening and a certified therapy dog. The "9 out of 10" booth taught students suicide warning signs they can recognize in their fellow classmates.

"Fresh Check is trying to help students develop healthy ways of coping with stress. Stress is

part of the academic experience, but there are ways of alleviating it. There are resources," said Leah Nelson, Jordan Porco Foundation program director.

It's exactly the kind of event Rivier should continue doing and more schools should consider hosting. All the gun control in the world will solve little if we continue to let our young people struggle in silence, alone with demons we should and can help them confront.

We applaud Rivier University officials and hope "Fresh Check Day" and other efforts like it help the Nashua campus stay as safe and healthy as it's ever been. More schools should follow that example.

© 2014, The Telegraph, Nashua, New Hampshire