

2026

Stronger Together: Building Assets for Brookings, A Day for Suicide Prevention

 Dacotah Bank Center:
February 18, 2026

 Attendees: 93+

 Resource Booths: 20

A day focused on how all of us can help increase concrete supports throughout Brookings and surrounding communities to instill hope, safety and healing.

Event organized by:



The Lineup:

- **Nikki Eining** - Creating Safe and Supportive Environments: Trauma-Informed Care
- **Machelle Kocer** - Conversations on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) Training
- **First Responder Interactive Panel**
 Michael J. Drake - City of Brookings Police Department
 Dan Hansen - South Dakota State University College of Pharmacy
 David Biteler - Brookings County Sheriff's Office
 Karen Weber - Brookings Health System
 Amy Ward - Brookings Behavioral Health & Wellness
- **Diana Leal & Karen Weber** - A Collaboration on Post-Overdoes Response

We extend our sincerest thanks to anonymous donors for their generous support of the 2026 Stronger Together event and shared commitment to suicide prevention. Partnerships like these help bring awareness, vital resources, and hope to our communities.

Thank You to Our 2026 Sponsors:



Event Photos



Emily's Hope



SD DSS- Division of Behavioral Health



Brookings Area United Way team



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First Responder Interactive Panel



Diana Leal & Karen Weber - A Collaboration on Post-Overdoses Response



Survey Results

About 45% of event participants completed a post event survey.

Majority of survey questions were rated on a scale of strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Attendee Takeaways...

- "A crisis usually lasts only 5 minutes and we all have the ability to help someone through a crisis just by asking and listening."
-First time attendee
- "It was impactful for me to see how much trust is built simply by following through on what we say we'll do when someone is in crisis."
-First time attendee
- "I really enjoyed seeing so many people from different backgrounds come together to learn and break stigma."
-First time attendee

- 100% of participants who completed the survey would recommend this event to others.
- 97% felt more aware of community resources and supports available for themselves or others.
- 97% felt that they improved their understanding of substance use and post-overdose care/follow-up support.
- 97% felt they learned new information or improved their knowledge about lethal means safety.
- 100% felt more confident knowing where or how to seek help/refer someone in need.
- 97% felt they increased their general understanding of suicide and suicide prevention.

Veterans Resources Highlight:

This year's Stronger Together event highlighted veteran services by bringing together organizations from across the state and county. Our Keynote speaker, who led the CALM training, brought a veteran-informed lens to conversations around lethal means safety, an important component of suicide prevention. Supporting and connecting veterans to these resources provide those who served our country with access to care, community, and support.

