

## **Artist walked out of darkness, ready to share hope, profits with community**

Tattoo artist Erick Armstrong has faced demons far worse than have inked on the backs, arms and shoulders of some of his clients. Once an addict, Armstrong said thoughts of suicide haunted him, in a darkness so deep he'd considered death as an "easy way out."

Armstrong has since turned his life around. "I worked nine-to-five jobs in my 20's," Armstrong said. But, reaching a milestone birthday last year, the 31 year old Armstrong said the idea of opening a tattoo shop called out to him. Armstrong apprenticed for a friend in Wyoming before opening his own shop in Alliance.

He is now working two jobs and wants to give back to his community by donating half of the profits from his shop, Tattoos by Erick, to the local Out of the Darkness Community Walks in Alliance and Scottsbluff, sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

**The Out of the Darkness Community Walks create awareness of the cause for prevention of suicide by drawing 100-150 people annually to walk together in memory of a family member or friend lost to suicide, or simply in promotion of prevention. This year is the third for community walks in the Panhandle, the second in Scottsbluff and third in Alliance.**

**The Alliance walk will begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday, September 21 at the Performing Arts Center in the commons area, with registration at 7 a.m. The Scottsbluff walk begins an hour later, at 9 a.m., also on Saturday, September 21 with registration at 8 a.m. at the Riverside Zoo Pavilion walking trail. Walkers may also register and form teams before the walk at [outofthedarkness.org](http://outofthedarkness.org).**

For more information on the Out of the Darkness Community Walks or suicide prevention, contact Sue Teal at 308-632-4412 or Jackie Jacobsen at 308-635-6175. In Alliance and Hemingford, contacts are Donna Jones, 308-760-4188 and Janelle Hansen, 308-487-3600, ext. 105.

For further information on suicide prevention, please visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org) or call toll free 866-701-7173. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.