

Nick Saban gives his support to another mental health awareness cause



Nick Saban receives a youth suicide prevention award standing next to Clark Flatt (right). (file photo)



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Just a week after speaking out about suicide prevention, Alabama Coach Nick Saban is showing his support for another cause related to mental health.

Saban will serve as the state honorary chairperson of NAMIWalks Alabama, a 5K walk that raises money and awareness for mental health issues.

"We are honored to have Coach Nick Saban as our Honorary Chairperson and look forward to achieving victory as we work toward raising \$65,000 to help support our education, advocacy, and support programs," Jane Nichols, NAMIWalks Alabama Board Chairperson, said in a news release.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, or NAMI, focuses on improving treatment and care for people with mental illnesses; advocating on local, state and national issues; and informing the public and reducing the stigma surrounding mental illnesses.

Local NAMI-affiliated support and advocacy groups are set up across the country to further the organization's mission.

In a news release, NAMI Alabama leaders noted Saban's proven record of resounding success as not only a head coach but a tactician, leader, organizer and motivator.

"During his nine seasons in Tuscaloosa, Saban's uncompromising dedication to excellence in every phase of the program has resulted in an extremely successful career," the release states. "Uncompromising dedication has also driven NAMI Alabama to support, educate, and advocate for persons with mental illness, their families, and others whose lives are affected by these brain disorders."

The NAMIWalks fundraiser will take place Sept. 24 at the Wynton Blount Cultural Park in Montgomery. Registration begins at 8 a.m., and the walk begins at 9 a.m. A virtual walk option enables anyone to participate, no matter their location. More information is available at namialabama.org.

"I am honored to serve as Honorary Chairperson for this year's NAMIWalks Alabama," Saban said in a news release. "Mental illness impacts so many families across our country and we appreciate all that NAMI does to help provide the support and education to those who suffer from mental health disorders. Hopefully, NAMIWalks Alabama will create more awareness and generate the necessary funds vital to the health and well-being of our state."

The announcement comes on the heels of news of the crucial role Saban played in **supporting legislation aimed to prevent youth suicide**. Last year, after meeting with a friend whose son committed suicide years earlier, Saban made two phone calls that kick-started the effort to enact the Jason Flatt Act in Alabama.

So far, sixteen states have enacted the legislation, **which requires annual suicide awareness prevention education training for K-12 school personnel**. The bill was in committee a week ago in Montgomery and could come to a vote this week.

Saban said last week that he took up this cause because of the time he's spent with young people. In 2012, he received the **Grant Teaff "Breaking the Silence" Award** for his efforts in youth suicide prevention.

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