

Dear Friends,

Has anyone been wondering what has been happening with HOPES?

We had some technical difficulties with our website and so you can now find us at [www.hopes-wi.org](http://www.hopes-wi.org). Let it just be said we learned a lot about domain registration as someone bought our old website address and tried to sell it back to us for \$1500 or \$15000. Luckily we had the ".org" registered to us also!

You have not received a newsletter since our last Walk Registration! So the first order of business is to Thank Everyone that participated in our walk and supported us by getting sponsors, helping at the walk, doing a quilt square, getting advocacy letters signed and getting the word out about the Walk and our work for suicide prevention.

I especially want to thank Pat Derer for her tireless efforts getting [business sponsorships](#). She also organizes the entire luncheon that we all enjoy. Without her our event would be just like any other walk. She puts her heart and soul into it and it shows!

It is our hope that you feel welcome and enjoy the feeling of support and camaraderie as we raise awareness of suicide and depression and do some fund raising to support the efforts of suicide prevention. We had more people than ever last year and our donations increased also. Our goal this year is to double what we did last year. So if we all just double our efforts or recruit one more person to join us we can do that!

With your help and Ann Abel's organizational efforts we collected many advocacy letters. May 14, 2001 Pat Derer, Mary Doemel, Jean Vogt and myself delivered those letters to the Senators and Representatives offices. We told them about the suicide prevention efforts of the Surgeon General's office and what we were doing in Wisconsin. With your letters we let them know it is important to us. We also had a huge tent at the Eclipse in Washington near the White House where we hung the quilts and gathered and shared information with one another. We read all the names of the people on our quilts and others read the names from their quilts. Mary Van Haute from Green Bay was in Washington DC and joined us in the reading of the names. Julie Cohen from Sen. Kohl's office joined us also. We ended the long day singing campfire songs as we waited for the sun to set so we could do our candlelight service. Plan to join us in 2002!

In July Pat Derer and her daughter Tina Neupert went to Denver, Colorado to learn about the Yellow Ribbon Program. It is a program that raises awareness of the problem of suicide in teens and gives them a tool, a card that they can use when they need help and don't know how to ask for help. It is an opportunity to teach about the warning signs of depression and suicide. The message also is that it is "Always OK to Ask4 Help." We will be sharing the Yellow Ribbon Program with it's training program for staff, teachers, parents and community members as part of our Community Action Kit.

August 3-5 2001 I had the privilege of receiving a scholarship to a State Suicide Prevention "Tool Bag" Conference. Joanne Berman, Sharon Lidberg and Gail Chapman, all employees of the WI Department of Health and Family Services, were there as well. It furthered the collaborative efforts that were started with a group of interested parties that are interested in suicide prevention efforts in our state. We are also including the Mental Health Association in Milwaukee County and many other agencies around the state. The goal of this committee is to create a strategy based on the Surgeon General's National Strategy for Suicide Prevention for suicide prevention that is suitable for Wisconsin. We are hoping our roll out date is May, which is Mental Health Month.

I am also working on a Community Action Kit so we can put all the ideas into action with the help of our communities. Just as the Federal government saw the need for guidance it also understood that the needs of each state are different. We feel that each community needs to address their own needs also. The Community Action Kit has the tools that can be used based on the WI Strategy for Suicide Prevention saving people precious time and yet addressing the problem.

We are also working with Goltz Seering on an Ad Campaign that you can do in your community.

In September I left my job and was able to attend many more meetings and have made some great connections and have been able to raise awareness by attending conferences armed with the quilts. The quilts have made a huge impact on the suicide prevention efforts of HOPES. They were displayed at the Crisis Conference titled "Putting a Face to Suicide" September 20-21, 2001 in WI Rapids. Because of our suggestions we were able to introduce people in our communities to National Speakers about suicide and suicide prevention. Jean Vogt, Pat Derer, Sara Leikness, Dennis Gates, Mary Doemel and I were there to "man" a table and offer information about our organization and the quilts. Mary Doemel & Jeanne Adams did a presentation about support groups. Jerry and Elsie Weyrauch from SPAN were there to talk about what is happening nationally.

In October the quilts and I were at the EMS for Children Conference raising awareness about suicide. We also attended a Teachers Conference at the Marriott in Madison where the State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmeister stopped and talked with me about the quilts. The Department of Public Instruction is on the WI Strategy for Suicide Prevention committee also.

The quilts were displayed in Milwaukee at the Mental Health Association's annual Amazing Grace Memorial Service on March 5, 2002. I took a quilt to the public hearing on parity, where I spoke on behalf of people that died of suicide as a result of not getting adequate mental health services and the stigma this issue causes. Linda Schabloski was there also and I think it was good to know that we had the quilt to make our points.

I am finding that people are very receptive about suicide prevention and the research is starting to get more plentiful and helpful. I will continue to stay connected with state and national organizations so that I can bring the concerns of the survivors in WI to light and bring the newest and best research back to WI.

Since September I see that there is a lot of work to be done. I see other people that have been advocates for other causes and have moved into full time organizations. At this time I will be working on projects with grant money when possible and will continue to move towards a full time organization. If you would like to help with this please let me know.

Our walk is the testimony to the people of WI that we want to make a difference in WI. As Survivors we come together for support and to remember why we want to make a difference. We look forward to seeing you [May 18, 2002](#).

On Saturday October 27, 2001 the Mental Health Center of Dane County Survivors of Suicide Support Group had a seminar called "After Suicide". HOPES sponsored the keynote speaker, Iris Bolton. Iris is know for her work with survivors and her book, "My Son, My Son" about the loss of her son Mitch, by suicide. It was truly a healing day as she shared her journey of grief and encouraged people to do their own grief work.

November 27, 2001 Lorie Line ([www.lorieline.com](http://www.lorieline.com)) played a piano Concert in Madison, WI.

I contacted her office and they agreed to donate some tickets to us. Thank you Lorie Line for your generous donation to our organization and all those people that donated to HOPES and went at the last minute. She has a truly beautiful Holiday Concert.

#### **WHAT'S NEXT?**

April 10-13 The American Association of Suicidology will present their 35th annual conference in Bethesda, MD. Saturday will be an all day event just for survivors. Call AAS, 202-237-2280 for registration & information or visit [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org).

July 13-16 [SPAN](#) (Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network) will have it's National Awareness Event in Washington, DC. We plan on being there with our quilts and our letters to our Senators and Representatives. Please plan to join us and help us get letters to take!

#### **Top Ten Reasons Why People Should Sign HOPES & SPAN Advocacy letters:**

1. Suicide is a serious public health problem in WI.
2. In WI suicides increased from 577 in 1997 to 593 in 1998 to 598 in 1999.
3. It is the second leading cause of death among young people age 15-24 in WI.
4. Suicide is 3 times more prevalent than homicide in WI.
5. Every 42 seconds someone in this country attempts suicide.
6. Every 16.7 minutes, someone completes suicide in the U.S.
7. Many millions of hours are spent by survivors trying to cope with their loss.
8. Many suicides are preventable, if people get the appropriate treatment.
9. People can do something about suicide. They can exercise their first amendment rights by petitioning the government for change.
10. Every suicidal person deserves treatment. The sooner the better!

Jean Vogt is creating a booklet we will take to Washington, DC that has 8x10 pictures of people that have died by suicide and all the people that miss them listed on the back of the picture. This is added to statistics and information that is specific to WI letting our Senators and Representatives know that the advocacy letters are on behalf our loved ones. You can call Jean at 920-262-1518. We will have more information on our website

August 17-18, 2002 "Out of the Darkness" a National Walk for Suicide Prevention is being put on by the Be the People.com which will contribute the money to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention for research. 888-261-7316

Sincerely,

*Susan*