

HOPES NEWSLETTER February 2007

From the Desk of Susan Conlin Opheim

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and good spirits in 2007. Today we have a lot of very good news that will be highlighted in this newsletter. I want everyone to know that your support of HOPES is one way that you do make a difference and we appreciate it.

This year will be our 9th annual Walk for the Awareness of Suicide and Depression in Olin Park. Once again we will have music to serenade you, the "Many Faces of Suicide" quilts will be on display and we will be serving lunch. We have asked the sandwich shop to come earlier and bring more food! For directions go to www.cityofmadison.com/parks and type in "Olin Park".

Remember that you can have tickets for each \$10.00 you collect to place in the drawings for our fabulous prizes. (If you have prizes that you would like to collect or donate please call our fabulous prize organizer Sara Leikness at 608-873-5765).

Do you love the idea of Mardi Gras? This year we will have beads to indicate your loss and your show of support for suicide prevention. An idea from the AFSP Out of the Darkness Walks. We will also have inspirational bracelets for sale from this year's walk.

We are trying something new this year. We are introducing the idea of "Teams". For those people that you have asked to make donations in the past we are encouraging you to ask them if they would like to join your "team" or make a donation. They may be looking for an opportunity to join a fun group of people who want to make a difference and win prizes. This will give them a chance to join our fun and learn more about HOPES. Remember that by asking others to participate you may meet a survivor who hasn't had this experience before.

Thank you, Thank you and Thank you again

If we plan it they will come! And you did! Our 8th Annual Walk in 2006. And we are so grateful. Because of all of your donations the work of suicide prevention in WI continues.

The crowd was upbeat, the weather was beautiful and we were surrounded by friends new and old. It doesn't get any better than that. We all come together with a purpose and an opportunity to remember our loved ones and to make a difference. Last year our event was raised to a new level by the addition of not only a Band but a DJ. Lunch was back which we all really enjoy. It's nice to spend a little time in the park with our fellow walkers and friends. Our prizes were better than ever and we have found a way to make the prize selection more efficient.

We were joined by many teens from McFarland and their friends and family that walked in memory of their friends who died by suicide that year. Their youthful enthusiasm was a welcome addition to our walk and we look forward to seeing them again this year.

I would like to take this time to thank the people that work on the "Walk Committee". I can tell you they put in many, many hours organizing this grand event and they strive to make it better and more meaningful each year. So thank you to Pat Derer, Mary Moldenhauer, Sara Leikness, Susan Howell and Dennis Gates for all your planning. We'd also like to thank all those that contribute prizes and donate baked goods. We would also like thank all of you who come to set up and clean up.

Dane County Initiative

HOPES has initiated a partnership with the Safe Community Coalition, Mental Health Center of Dane County, Public Health of Madison and Dane County, Club TNT, NAMI, Mental Health Association, Kubly Foundation, local faith communities and school districts in Dane County. Our plan is to have all communities in Dane County represented. We have come together in a workgroup to plan and conduct a Suicide Prevention Call to Action and Mobilization in Fall 2007. We also see this as an ongoing initiative that will improve communication and services for those who may be suicidal or in need of mental health services in Dane County. One of the strengths of this initiative is putting it in the public health arena with consultation and participation by the mental health community.

Dr. David Mays

We are collaborating with Dr. David Mays, former forensic Clinical Director at Mendota Mental Health in Madison, who is a seasoned clinician and highly sought after presenter, and others to fund and create a DVD about Suicide Risk Assessment. This has been identified as a need for professionals in our State Strategy. We are proud to be part of the funding and distribution of this tool that can be used to increase the competency of mental health professionals as they do their valued work.

Suicide Prevention in WI

The following are the principals that we are encouraging as we educate people about suicide prevention.

1. SUICIDE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

Deaths in WI 2004

Suicide	656
Homicide	149
HIV	48

2. SUICIDE IS OFTEN PREVENTABLE with education, treatment and support.

3. 90% of the people that die of suicide have a TREATABLE MENTAL ILLNESS OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEM. Of those 90% approximately 60% have a depressive disorder.

4. We must address SUICIDE PREVENTION ACROSS THE LIFESPAN. If a grandparent dies by suicide it increases the risk of other family members 5-6 times.

5. SUICIDE IS COMPLEX

6. SUICIDE IS A COMMUNITY PROBLEM and everyone can have a role.

7. PROTECTIVE FACTORS should be a part of suicide prevention.

8. SURVIVORS of Family or Friends who have died by suicide and **SURVIVORS** of ATTEMPTS of suicide should be included in prevention efforts.

QPR

HOPES has been offering the QPR program of suicide prevention since we started. It is a gatekeeper program that encourages positive action by teaching people how to ask the Question about suicide to someone that we are worried about or someone who is showing the signs of suicide. It also offers suggestions about how we can Persuade people to get the help they need. Identifying places and people that we can Refer them to is also part of the training. We take the fear out of asking the question and give people the courage to ask the question.

We have conducted QPR in many communities and have encouraged other communities that were starting community coalitions to have the QPR training as part of their plan. We plan to offer gatekeeper training listings and gatekeeper trainers on our website www.hopes-wi.org in the future. If your local church, business or other organization would like to hold a QPR presentation let us know at smopheim@aol.com.

Garret Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant

HOPES has been a member of the State of WI Suicide Prevention Initiative workgroup since the beginning when the WI Strategy for Suicide Prevention was developed. One of the tasks of this workgroup was to develop ideas and plans for suicide prevention for WI.

Each year HOPES sends representatives to Washington, DC for the Suicide Prevention Action Network's National Awareness Event, training and an opportunity to tell our Senators and Representatives that Mental Health and Suicide Prevention are a concern of the constituents in their state. Last year Mary Doemel and Jill Collins attended the event and took our Quilts. When the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, that was introduced by Sen. Gordon Smith of Oregon, who lost his son to suicide, passed the Senate and House of Representatives and was signed by President Bush, HOPES expressed thanks to the Senators and Representatives from Wisconsin that voted for the bill with a certificate of appreciation.

The Department of Health and Family Services contracted with the Mental Health Association of WI to apply for the Grant. Shel Gross from the MHA, in partnership with the SPI workgroup, the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Health and Family Services and the Medical College of Wisconsin applied for the grant. The Garrett Lee Smith Grant for Youth Suicide was awarded to WI for \$1,125,000 over 3 years to be administered by the Mental Health Association.

Recipients of the Grant are the Fond du Lac School District, Sheboygan Schools, Marathon County, Portage County, La Courte Oreilles tribe, Wisconsin School for the Deaf in Walworth County, the Sparta area and Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton School District, Lafayette County and Green County.

Project Manager is Shel Gross. Brenda Jennings has been hired as Project coordinator and Judy Larsen as a mentor. They are working with the sites and have already written a WI Youth Suicide Prevention Start-up Toolkit. You can find it at www.mhawisconsin.org under suicide prevention. They are also working on a Postvention plan to be used in communities after a suicide. Each site had an opportunity to have a person from their sites trained in the QPR gatekeeper training.

HOPES will stay involved in this project so that we can learn from their work and share it as we continue to encourage communities to start their own suicide prevention efforts. We also continue our work in encouraging people to include the whole community in suicide prevention.

One Person Can Make A Difference

One morning, just before dawn a man woke early so he could watch the sunrise over the ocean. As he walked along the beach he came across a young girl who seemed to be doing something peculiar. She was picking up starfish and throwing them into the sea-one after another. He asked her what she was doing.

The tide washes up all these starfish and they can't get back by themselves", she said. They will die in the sun if I don't throw them back into the water."

The man looked up and down the beach at the thousands of stranded starfish. He couldn't help telling her, "But there are too many starfish to save before sunrise.

Why bother? You won't make much of a difference.

She paused for a moment, then picked up another starfish and threw it as far as her slender arm could manage. With a satisfied grin, she turned to the man and simply said,

"I made a difference to that one."

The man stood in silence, considering the girl's youthful wisdom. Then, with a smile of his own, he reached down for a starfish... and tossed it into the sea.

Make a Difference... Every Day

Dates to Remember in 2007

April 10-13 American Association of Suicidology Conference, 40 years of Suicide Prevention: Moving Forward with Education and Training. Saturday April 14 Healing after Suicide: Survivorship: Receiving and Giving Back. New Orleans, LA www.suicidology.org

May 5 HOPES Walk for Awareness of Suicide and Depression. Madison www.hopes-wi.org

May 5 Mental Health Association Annual Comedy Event www.mhawisconsin.org

June 9-10 American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Out of the Darkness Overnight walk in New York City. www.afsp.org

July 18-21 Suicide Prevention Action Network's 12th Annual National Suicide Prevention Awareness and Training Event. Washington, DC - WI's Quilts for the "Many Faces of Suicide" National Quilt will be on display. www.spanusa.org

September 10-15 Suicide Prevention Week recognized with a display of our WI "Many Faces of Suicide" Quilts in the Capitol with educational materials in Madison, WI.

Saturday September 15 Beyond the Blues 2007 in Milwaukee by the Kubly Foundation. www.charlesekublyfoundation.org

November 17 National Survivors Day Many locations in WI offer a program that includes the viewing of the AFSP Survivor Panel through a teleconference. Check out these sites by going to www.hopes-wi.org and www.afsp.org for a city near you.