

# Suicide Prevention: It's Everybody's Business

November 2006, Issue 2

A Newsletter from the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Group

## KY Suicide Prevention in Youth – a Collaborative Effort (SPYCE)

During National Suicide Prevention Week (September 10-16, 2004), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced the award of 46 grants to support activities to prevent suicide. We are excited to announce that Kentucky is one of the recipients. The Kentucky Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation will manage the \$400,000 annual grant with consultation from the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Group. With a focus on youth, the grant will fund a statewide effort to raise awareness, enhance effective interventions and utilize research and data collection methodologies to reduce the number of completed suicides by youth in the state. The effort will include not only public and professional education about risk factors for suicide and protective factors to help prevent suicide but also training in prevention, early intervention and post-intervention. The grant may be available for a total of three years.

### THANK YOU & FAREWELL!

Jason H. Padgett, MPA came to the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Group as the staff coordinator in 2005. He brought a good attitude and new ideas to each meeting, and led the joint efforts of the Kentucky Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services and the Department of Public Health's initiative to reduce the number of people who die by suicide across Kentucky.

Jason recently took on a new role with Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN-USA), a national suicide prevention organization. Jason's last day with KSPG was September 30<sup>th</sup> and he is already greatly missed.

On a positive note, we look forward to working with our interim staff coordinator, Barbara Kaminer, who is also with the Department.

We know that we are not saying goodbye to Jason as a colleague, and we know that he left KSPG in good hands with Barbara. So thanks, Jason, and farewell!

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To begin receiving the KSPG newsletter, e-mail [kate@kypartnership.net](mailto:kate@kypartnership.net) with "SUBSCRIBE KSPG NEWSLETTER" in the subject line.

**A Life is Too Much to Lose**



## Hope From A Survivor

by Anna Columbia



June, 1984, 18 years old, graduating high school; stepping into the realm of “adulthood”..... This should have been a time of great joy for me, but instead it was a living hell. I was graduating with full honors, near the top of my class, and could only think of how I could escape my life and make the pain go away. As with all problems there was a solution and I decided to take that solution; I decided to end my life and suffer no more. Suffer no more the pain that plagued me daily. I don't know what sent me over the edge to make that decision, but once it was made, the weight that had been bearing down on my mind and spirit was gone. Left in its place was a peace that was such a relief; I knew it had to do with making the right choice.

I didn't get far in my planning, however. That evening, as if drawn by some emotional magnet, my best friend Steve called. He had just gotten off work and was on his way home but wanted to chat first. After talking with me for some time, Steve decided that he would pick me up and go riding around instead of going home. We pulled into a dark Dairy Queen parking lot after hours and Steve said, “I know what you're planning to do and I love you too much to let you do it”. Apparently, something in my voice or what I said gave away my plan.

Wow! I knew that he knew me better than anyone, but that was still a shock. I tried to get away, get out of the car, anything to avoid what he said, or might say. He just pulled me

close, asked what made me go “over the edge” and kept telling me he loved me.

I don't know how long I cried that night but finally I was able to speak and pour out my pain. We sat for quite some time while I tried to put my pain into words; tried to put words to feelings and thoughts I couldn't explain to myself. Somehow, I managed and attempted to pull myself together. I have always been one who keeps my word and that night, Steve made me promise to never consider something like that again, but to call him when things got bad. I wish I could say I never needed him, but I did, and I also called a few others through the years whose reaction was very similar.

In December, I turned 40. I wasn't supposed to live out the last 20+ years but thanks to Steve and to other people who cared enough to reach out to me, I did. Now, I get paid to help others hold on to the rope they call life and not let go. I work with attorneys who have reached the end of their rope and are debating whether they have the energy or the desire to climb back up, and wonder if anyone cares if they do make it to the top again. Last year, at least four attorneys in Kentucky took their own lives. There is no way to know for sure how many others did as well.

Suicide prevention saves lives. There are solutions to the pain and suffering that leads to suicide, and one life is truly too many to lose.

## Suicide Prevention Efforts Across Kentucky

### **“With Understanding, New Hope” event hosted by Northern Kentucky Suicide Prevention Coalition**

To kick-off Suicide Prevention Awareness week the Northern Kentucky Suicide Prevention Coalition sponsored “With Understanding, New Hope” a community event to raise awareness of suicide prevention and support survivors of suicide. The event, held on September 10<sup>th</sup>, featured a presentation on grief by Ken Czillinger, Bereavement Coordinator, Vitas Hospice and College of Mt. Saint Joseph instructor. The event was attended by approximately 30 people who participated in a monarch butterfly release to honor the lives of those who have died by suicide. This is the second community event the coalition has sponsored to celebrate suicide prevention awareness week.



### **Kentucky Department for Mental Health/Mental Retardation Services Kicks Off National Suicide Prevention Awareness Week**

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Group hosted **Suicide Prevention: It's Everybody's Business** at the Transportation Cabinet in Frankfort to observe National Suicide Prevention Week. Governor Fletcher proclaimed September as Suicide Prevention month in a taped address. A video clip of Governor Fletcher's address to the group can be found on the KSPG website at <http://mhmr.ky.gov/mhsas/kspg.asp>. The event had several speakers including Representative Mary Lou Marzian, D-Louisville and Senator Tom Buford, R-Nicholasville. Many in attendance were family and friends of those who died by suicide or survivors of suicide attempts. Kentucky Suicide Prevention Group continues their mission of decreasing suicide deaths and attempts in the Commonwealth through advocacy, education, training, and evaluation.



Senator Buford



Representative Marzian

## Research Brief

Whitlock, J., Eckenrode, J., & Silverman, D. (2006). Self-injurious behaviors in a college population. *Pediatrics*, 117(6), 1939-1948.

In the last few years, more attention has been given to the problem of suicide among college students; however, less is known about how often college students try to injure themselves. The authors of this study set out to learn more about this issue by conducting an Internet-based survey with a random sample of 8300 students at two northeastern US universities. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of invited students took the survey. Almost 1 in 5 (17%) of the college students who completed the survey reported that they had engaged in self-injurious behavior one or more times in their lifetime. Of these, about 1 in 3 (36%) reported that no one knew about their self-injurious behaviors, and only 3% reported that a doctor knew about it. The reluctance of these students to seek help or advice points to a strong need for medical and mental health professionals to find effective ways to detect and address self-injurious behaviors.

-submitted by Vestena Robbins, Ph.D.

## Special Report: Pushed to the Limit

This excerpt is from an article printed in the October 8, 2006 edition of the Sacramento Bee and was written by Scott Howard-Cooper – Bee Staff Writer [www.sacbee.com](http://www.sacbee.com)

In interviews with dozens of psychologists, school administrators, coaches, parents and athletes nationally over six months, The Bee found that most universities are ill-prepared to deal with college athletes in emotional crises, and many rely on systems that often become an impediment to treatment.

No one knows how many college athletes kill themselves each year: not the National Collegiate Athletic Association, which as the governing body for university sports ordinarily charts critical issues; not the schools themselves, which often promise blanket support for all an athlete's problems during recruiting pitches.

Experts say that having mental-health professionals dedicated at least part time to a college's athletic program makes athletes far more likely to seek help if emotional problems arise. Such programs also are far more likely to have written guidelines for coaches and athletes to identify problems and ways to seek help.

But of roughly 1,200 member-schools in the NCAA, only about 25 have mental-health professionals dedicated at least part time to athletes. Among California universities, the University of California, Davis, is one of only two schools with such a dedicated position.

"In the athletic culture, it's not OK to have mental-health concerns," said William Parham, who worked with teams at UCLA for 21 years before becoming the dean of the Graduate School of Professional Psychology at John F. Kennedy University in Pleasant Hill. "Mental health concerns are put on the back burner in the athlete's world."

The counseling center at Western Kentucky University has prepared a synopsis of warning signs for athletes in distress for the athletic department, and James Madison University posted a lengthy plan on its athletic Web site for crisis intervention, including a flow chart showing who calls whom in an emergency and the role each person plays.

The full article can be found at <http://www.sacbee.com/296/story/35543.html>

**The Practical Art of Suicide Assessment** by Shawn Christopher Shea. PhD,  
ISBN: 0471237612 List Price: \$34.95 Published by John Wiley & Sons  
Dr. Shea is Director of the Training Institute for Suicide Assessment and Clinical Interviewing  
([www.suicideassessment.com](http://www.suicideassessment.com)), and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Dartmouth Medical School

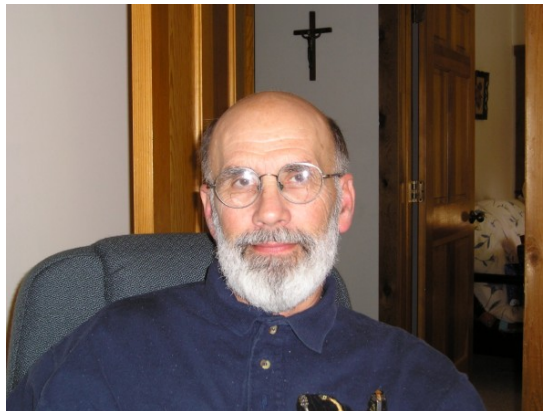
A Personal Book Review by Bob Robey

The sole purpose of this book is to save lives and there by negate the suffering that the tragedy of suicide leaves behind.

Though hundreds of books have been written on the topic of suicide and depression, few target the larger lay population that have not been directly touched by suicide. Millions remain unaware that suicide can and does happen in families each and every day, in every kind of home and community. Each year, thousands of families not only must cope with unspeakable grief that suicide leaves behind, but also learn the sometimes agonizing truth of the existence of warning signs and clues that their loved one was in a suicidal crisis. As one mother said after the death of her 17 year old son, "We never worried about suicide; drugs and other things, but not suicide. We are learning now what I wished we knew before his death. If we had, he might be still alive."

Dr. Shea attempts to write, in a non-clinical way, utilizing personal stories of others who have experienced a suicidal crisis and what helped them through the crisis, as well as thoughts and comments by family members who have lost a loved one to suicide. The author's own stories and personal experiences from working with survivors of suicide, and suicidal persons for more than a decade, and his work in prevention are inserted throughout the book. Dr. Shea also draws from researchers and experts in the field and presents accurate and factual information concerning depression and suicide.

The author hopes to establish early in the book the awareness that suicidal thoughts are common and that suicidal acts and threats are more frequent than most people realize. After the foundation of awareness of the problem of suicide in American families and its most probable causes has been established, Dr. Shea introduces prevention strategies for families and friends. Theses strategies include the importance of family members becoming Gatekeepers, i.e. being able to recognize warning signs, and what to do in the event that someone may be contemplating suicide. This also includes increasing protective factors in the home, such as keeping guns secured, especially if young persons are in the home.



\* We are proud to announce that Bob Robey is the 2006 recipient of the annual Suicide Prevention Advocacy Recognition in Kentucky -- **SPARK Award**. He was honored at the October 20<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Suicide Prevention meeting held in Frankfort. Bob has been the major force behind the training of over 100 suicide prevention gatekeepers in Kentucky over the past three years. He also facilitates Survivors of Suicide support groups in the Owensboro area. Bob gives of his time and himself unselfishly when others are in need. Thank you Mr. Robey for all you do.

## Suicide Support Groups

### Survivor of Suicide (SOS) Support Groups

- Ashland area – Contact: Paula Rymer (606) 836-7966 [PaulaKRymer@aol.com](mailto:PaulaKRymer@aol.com)
- Bowling Green - Contact: Anita Hudson (270) 202-3204 or [anita\\_hudson1968@yahoo.com](mailto:anita_hudson1968@yahoo.com)
- Campbellsville - Contact: Alice Steele (270) 456-6009
- Fort Thomas/Northern KY - Contact: Ken & Carol Himes (859) 441-1958 or [spbears@fuse.net](mailto:spbears@fuse.net)
- Frankfort – Contact: Rhonda Wilhoite (502) 223-1744 or (800) 926-1302
- Hazard- Contact: Phyllis Day (606) 439-2111
- Lexington - Contact: Magdalena Lehman (859) 277-2700 or (800) 876-6005
- Louisville - Contact: Glenn Raymond (502) 583-5676 or Gage Donohue (812) 283-1111
- Owensboro- Contact: Bob Robey (270) 276-5531 or [rwrobey@earthlink.net](mailto:rwrobey@earthlink.net)
- Paducah - Contact: Karen Winkel (270) 442-3722
- Somerset – Contact: Beverly Hargis (606) 678-4853 or [DeputyJudgeExec@PulaskiCountyGovt.com](mailto:DeputyJudgeExec@PulaskiCountyGovt.com)

### Local Suicide Prevention Groups

- Ashland area – Contact: Paula Rymer (606) 836-7966 [PaulaKRymer@aol.com](mailto:PaulaKRymer@aol.com)
- Bowling Green/Barren River area – Contact: Evelyn Libe [elibe@lifeskills.com](mailto:elibe@lifeskills.com)
- (Lexington) SYSC – Hatim Omar [Hatim.Omar@uky.edu](mailto:Hatim.Omar@uky.edu)
- London – Contact: Barbara Cottrell [Barbara.A.Cottrell@usps.gov](mailto:Barbara.A.Cottrell@usps.gov)
- Louisville – Contact: Julia Richerson [jricherson@FHCLOUISVILLE.ORG](mailto:jricherson@FHCLOUISVILLE.ORG)
- Northern KY – Denis Walsh [DWalsh@northkey.org](mailto:DWalsh@northkey.org)
- Owensboro – Bob Robey [rwrobey@earthlink.net](mailto:rwrobey@earthlink.net)
- Somerset – Beverly Hargis [DeputyJudgeExec@PulaskiCountyGovt.com](mailto:DeputyJudgeExec@PulaskiCountyGovt.com)

### Local Suicide Prevention Foundations/Non-Profits

- Lee Eric Drake Foundation – Contacts: Dan Padgett [Dan\\_Padgett@bgmetalfarming.com](mailto:Dan_Padgett@bgmetalfarming.com) or Kelly Bush [Kelly.Bush@leeericdrake.com](mailto:Kelly.Bush@leeericdrake.com)
- Nathan Alan Eisert Foundation – Contact: Jan Ulrich [janulrich@bellsouth.net](mailto:janulrich@bellsouth.net), [www.tellthemomma.com](http://www.tellthemomma.com)
- Zach's Hope Yellow Ribbon Foundation – Paducah area: Tina McKnight [paultina@accessus.net](mailto:paultina@accessus.net)

\*\*\*If your support group is listed incorrectly, or if your support group is not listed and you would like for it to be, please contact Barbara Kaminer at [Barbara.Kaminer@ky.gov](mailto:Barbara.Kaminer@ky.gov) or Kate Overberg at [kate@kypartnership.net](mailto:kate@kypartnership.net).

## KY Suicide Prevention Group Steering Committee

Denis Walsh, Chair, NorthKey Community Care  
Julie Cerel, Vice Chair, University of Kentucky  
Mary Bolin-Reece, University of Kentucky  
Phyllis Combs, Bluegrass MHMR Board  
Linda Lancaster, Department for Public Health  
Jim McFarland, Survivor  
Connie Milligan, Bluegrass MHMR Board

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[jam\\_mcf9@msn.com](mailto:jam_mcf9@msn.com)  
[cpmilligan@bluegrass.org](mailto:cpmilligan@bluegrass.org)

If you would like to share or submit information for the newsletter, please contact Kate Overberg at [kate@kypartnership.net](mailto:kate@kypartnership.net). All information is subject to the approval of KSPG and the newsletter committee.

## National Strategy for Suicide Prevention:

- Goal 1:** Promote Awareness that Suicide is a Public Health Problem that is Preventable
- Goal 2:** Develop Broad-based Support for Suicide Prevention
- Goal 3:** Develop and Implement Strategies to Reduce the Stigma Associated with Being a Consumer of Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Suicide Prevention Services
- Goal 4:** Develop and Implement Suicide Prevention Programs
- Goal 5:** Promote Efforts to Reduce Access to Lethal Means and Methods of Self-Harm
- Goal 6:** Implement Training For Recognition of At-Risk Behavior and Delivery of Effective Treatment
- Goal 7:** Develop and Promote Effective Clinical and Professional Practices
- Goal 8:** Improve Access to and Community Linkages with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Goal 9:** Improve Reporting and Portrayals of Suicidal Behavior, Mental Illness, and Substance Abuse in the Entertainment and News Media
- Goal 10:** Promote and Support Research on Suicide and Suicide Prevention
- Goal 11:** Improve and Expand Surveillance Systems

### Upcoming Meetings & Events

- 11/2 Preventing Adult Suicide Conference, 8:30-3:30, Century Christian Church, Owensboro, contact Georgia Renfrow for info or to register at (270) 689-6576 or [georgiarenfrow@rvbh.com](mailto:georgiarenfrow@rvbh.com)
- 11/4 Out of the Darkness Community Walk, Louisville, KY - [www.outofthedarkness.org](http://www.outofthedarkness.org)
- 11/13 QPR Training, George Rogers Clark High School, 5-8p.m. sponsored by Community Education, \$10 fee, contact Carolyn Burtner at (859) 744-4482 or [carolynm.burtner@ky.gov](mailto:carolynm.burtner@ky.gov)
- 11/17 KSPG Full Group Meeting-10a.m.-12p.m., Large Conference Room, Fair Oaks, Frankfort
- 11/18 National Survivors of Suicide Day - [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- 12/4 QPR Training, Clark County Health Department, 5:30-8:30, contact Carolyn Burtner at (859) 744-4482 or [carolynm.burtner@ky.gov](mailto:carolynm.burtner@ky.gov)
- 12/15 KSPG Full Group Meeting-10a.m.-12p.m., Large Conference Room, Fair Oaks, Frankfort  
See the KSPG calendar at [mhmr.ky.gov/mhsas/kspg.asp](http://mhmr.ky.gov/mhsas/kspg.asp) for more information, updates, cancellations, etc.
- 2/22 KSPG Advocacy Event – please see February newsletter for details
- 4/11 American Association of Suicidology conference – see future newsletter for details

Kentucky Suicide Prevention Group  
KY Department for Mental Health & Mental Retardation Services  
100 Fair Oaks Lane, 4E-D.  
Frankfort, KY 40621

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

