



Summer 2006

Reporter

Reporting on Suicide PREVENTION Efforts in Southeastern PA

GET INVOLVED!

Suicide Prevention Week in PA

September 10-16, 2006

Kick-Off Event:

Capitol Rotunda, Harrisburg, PA

Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2006

9am to 3pm

The Pennsylvania Suicide Prevention Initiative will be sponsoring the *2nd Annual Kick-Off Event for Suicide Prevention Week in Pennsylvania*. The event will be held at the *Capitol Rotunda from 9 AM to 3 PM* and will include speakers, displays from various organizations and task forces throughout the state. The Governor, Secretaries of Departments, various legislators and other key officials in the government are all invited to speak and participate in the event. Jerry Reed, Executive Director of Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN) USA is slated to speak along with various survivors of suicide, survivors of suicide attempts, consumers and health officials. In addition, The Empty Shoe Memorial will be built to honor loved ones lost to suicide. The Empty Shoe Memorial is comprised of shoes either belonging to a loved one lost by suicide, or slightly used shoes symbolizing the loved one. People are encouraged not only to bring a pair of shoes in memory of someone, but to feel free to include an index card inside the shoes with the person's name, age, date of death and message, if desired.



The state Suicide Prevention Initiative is hoping the event at the Rotunda will be one of many events occurring across the state during Suicide Prevention Week in Pennsylvania, which also coincides with the National Suicide Prevention Week. It is their desire to see counties, townships, cities, boroughs, and suicide prevention task forces statewide conduct an event that will raise awareness to the alarming issue of suicide in Pennsylvania. The statistics are alarming. More people die by suicide than homicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 – 24, and every 90 minutes someone over the age of 65 kills themselves. These numbers illustrate the need for a statewide awareness and involvement in suicide and suicide prevention.

The state also hopes to introduce the new Suicide Prevention Strategy for Adults and Older Adults at this time. This plan focuses on the entire population including the elderly, law enforcement, and other at risk populations. The hope is that this also will bring suicide prevention to the forefront and addressed as a public health problem. *Mark your calendars for this important event!*

Calendar

SPAN USA's National Awareness Event, **September 6 – 9**. Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA) is holding their 10th annual event in Washington, D.C. *For more information, visit their website at www.spanusa.org or call (202) 449-3600.*

Pennsylvania's Suicide Prevention Week Kick-Off Event, **Capitol Rotunda, Harrisburg, September 12, from 9 am to 3 pm**. (Speakers between 12 pm and 2 pm). *Call Heidi Bryan at 610-715-0076 or Tami Wright at 717-772-6870 for more information.*

Annual Memorial Candle Lighting Service, **Wednesday, September 13 at 7 PM**, Rose Tree Park Amphitheatre, Providence Road, Media. *For information contact Linda Falasco at phant45@comcast.net.*

Interfaith Memorial Service for those who have lost someone to suicide, St. Martin's Church, 400 King of Prussia Road, Radnor, **Thursday, September 14, at 7:30 pm**. *Call us at 610-715-0076 for more information.*

Feeling Blue SPC's "Swing Into Life" Dance Event, Eastern University Gymnasium, **Saturday, September 16, 7pm to 9pm**. *For details, visit www.swingintolife.org.*

8 Week Survivor of Suicide Support Group, **Tuesdays at 7:30 beginning September 29**, at Peter's Place, 150 Radnor Financial Center, Radnor. This program is a six-week, educational support group for people who have lost a loved one to suicide. *Contact Carrie Miluski at (610) 687-5150 for more information.*

Safe Kids Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Child Death Review Childhood Injury Prevention Conference and Network Meeting. **September 26, 27, and 28**. Liberty Mountain Resort and Conference Center, 78 Country Club Trail, Carroll Valley, PA.

4th Annual Recovery Expo, **September 30, 9am to 4pm**, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, 181 Sharp Lane, Exton. This expo has been created to educate and assist those people and their families who wish to learn more about alcohol and other drug use disorders in a non-threatening atmosphere. *For more information, contact Wendy Beck at wendy.beck@umcr.org or (610) 363-6164.*

Out of the Darkness Walk, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, **Sunday, October 1**. *For more information, visit www.asfp.org.*

4th Annual Montgomery County Suicide Prevention Awareness Walk, Norristown Farm Park, Germantown Pike and North Wales Road, East Norriton, **Saturday, October 7, 10 am to 12 pm**. *Call Tony Salvatore at 610-279-6100 or tsalvatore@mces.org for more information.*

National Survivor of Suicide Day, **Saturday, November 18**. *Call Pat Gainey at 215-746-7256 for more information.*

610-715-0076

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Letter from the Director

Dreams do come true!

In preparing for this article, I started to summarize what Feeling Blue has been doing the past 12 months and I came upon a startling realization. Not just one, but several of our long-term goals and dreams of mine are being reached! While they may not be complete, some of my dreams for Feeling Blue are coming true.



First of all, we are growing and have several new volunteers assisting us now. The newest volunteers for Feeling Blue include Kate Rödde, Laura Weishew, Pat Patterson, Ashley Brown, Michelle Liberatore, Peggy Justh,

Frank Bellafante, Amy Cunningham and Katie Brophy. Katie has graciously offered to be the editor of the newsletter, which is a huge help and definitely a dream come true! Katie writes for a medical advertising agency and women's magazines on a freelance basis. Amy is a graduate student from LaSalle and has become a QPR gatekeeper trainer, so she'll be helping us out with that. Welcome everyone and thanks for your help! We held our first volunteer recognition luncheon at Cedar Hollow Inn in Yellow Springs this past January. We had a delightful time and enjoyed getting the chance to meet everyone and learning more about each other.

When we first began offering QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention training in 2001, one of our goals was to be able to offer it to the teachers of school districts. This past June, that goal was realized when I did a QPR training for the middle school teachers of the Neshaminy School District. One teacher commented, "This is exactly what we needed!"

We also wanted to offer QPR training to law enforcement officials and offer our newly developed training called, *On The Scene* (responding to the scene of a suicide), as part of the package (see the Spotlight article). Conducting this training was another dream come true! I was nervous at first, I didn't know how the officers would react to it, but I was put to ease almost immediately by their participation and interaction. Not only was I relieved, I was also impressed by their dedication and interest in suicide prevention and in helping loved ones when responding to a suicide scene.

I wanted to have our own posters promoting awareness and education about depression and/or suicide and that dream came true this year also. We had the privilege of working with Dan Good, a 14-year-old survivor of suicide, who designed two posters for us. The initial response to the posters was overwhelmingly positive; we can't wait to begin working on distributing them to schools, libraries, township buildings, and interested organizations.

Since our inception, we have trained over 1,000 people in QPR, distributed over 2,000 of our resource manuals, and have received over 8,500 hits on our website. All of this is beyond my wildest dreams and I'm extremely thankful to everybody who helped make it happen.

Finally, my biggest dream came true this past September when my husband, Bill, came home from the University of Pennsylvania Hospital, walking and with his own heart. I want to thank all of

you who prayed for him, contacted me, dropped off meals, and supported me through that difficult time. I especially want to thank Faye Rentschler, Paula Meitzler, Barbara Rawls, my sister-in-law Susan Greene and my nephew and niece, Jimmy and Mindy. They are the ones who dropped everything and came to the hospital in the middle of the night, sat with me or talked to me day after day, and were there for me the entire time. Also, my neighbor Nancy Sabia and friends Joelle and Buddy Burgess who helped take care of our dogs during Bill's hospitalization. I am truly blessed with these wonderful friends, and with the wonderful people in my life. I want you to know I appreciate every single one of you.

Heidi Bryan

President and Director

Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council is a member of the New Beginnings Nonprofit incubator at Resources for Human Development, Inc. (RHD). RHD is a large, diversified nonprofit organization, based in Philadelphia that oversees roughly 150 programs. The New Beginnings incubator provides small and startup nonprofit programs with a range of services and support designed to help them grow to achieve their missions.

Currently, Feeling Blue is a volunteer community service organization.

Our officers are:

Heidi Bryan, *President & Director*
Bill Bryan, *Vice President*
Laura Bodenger, *Secretary*
Tony Lynch, *Treasurer*

Kate Rodde
Happy Shipley
Laura Weishew
Katie Brophy

Our volunteers & advisory board members are:

Ashley Brown
Amy Cunningham
Peggy Justh
Gale Muir

Michelle Liberatore
Pat Patterson
Dr. Robert Schwarz
Dolores Toews
George Bodenger, Esq.
Shannon Good, *Good Group, LLC*

*Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council is made possible by the dedicated work of these people and through foundation support and individual donations. We are a tax-exempt agency, therefore your donations are **tax deductible**. Please consider supporting our cause – the cost of materials for one QPR training of 25 people averages \$100, but the knowledge gained is invaluable. You can make a difference!*

Our donors are:

Individuals

Laura Weishew, *In memory of*
H. Steven McGowen, *brother*
Mrs. Barbara Rawls
Ms. Elizabeth Pesce
The Rev. H. Barry Evans
Leigh and Roy Harvey
Ms. Cynthia Borst
Ms. Sally Hager
Ms. Michelle Steinberger
Ms. Barbara Johnson
David and Joyce Randolph
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Albert, Jr.
Ms. Virginia Hartsfield
Buddy and Joelle Burgess

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Ms. Dorothy Giachetti
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Ms. Caroline Unger
Anonymous (10 donors)

Organizations

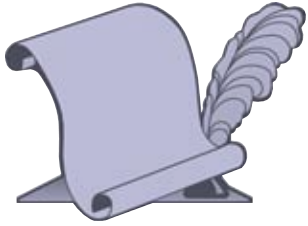
Episcopal Community Services
St. Martin's Episcopal Church
The Good Group, LLC

Foundations

Fourjay Foundation
Genuardi Family Foundation
The Philadelphia Foundation

Advocacy Corner

Making a difference one click at a time!



Letter writing has always been an integral advocacy tool. But, do you think sometimes that your representative is too busy to read your letter? Worried a letter is too difficult or too time-consuming to write? It's a common myth that writing letters requires a lot of

time and when all is done, words fall on deaf ears. The reality, however, may surprise you. Recently, many organizations are helping to make this task a simple one. They take the leg work out of letter writing by offering template letters online that can be automatically routed to your local representative through the Internet. Chances are, too, that he or she will read your correspondence.

A recent report conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation, an organization dedicated to helping Congress become more productive, found that 79 percent of the congressional staff surveyed believes the Internet has made it easier for citizens to become involved in public policy. In addition, a large number (48 percent) believes the Internet has made members more responsive to their constituents. "I think the public is cynical about the political process. People think they don't have an influence, but the offices are saying 'yes, they do'," says

Lidia Bernik, Program Coordinator of SPAN USA, the Suicide Prevention Action Network (USA). Traditional hand-written or typed letters are still well-received, says Bernik, but e-mail is proving to be very effective. "Some offices are more advanced than others, but more and more, [e-mail] is the preferred method of communication."

SPAN USA is one organization that has made Internet communication easier for all of us. Once you sign up with SPAN USA, they will alert you of legislation that applies to your area. To begin, log on to <http://capwiz.com/spanusa/mlm/signup/>. On this page, there's an option to jump onto this Action E-list. In addition, if you type in your zip code, SPAN USA will provide you with the names and contact information of your elected officials. From there, you can choose from a list of customized messages targeting your elected officials about the current issue. Within the message area, you have the opportunity to change words and personalize your message, something Bernik strongly suggests. It's that easy! Log onto www.spanusa.org for more information.



Spotlight

Feeling Blue Reaches Out to Local Police

Did you know that police officers have a suicide rate three or four times greater than the general population? The numbers of deaths due to suicide are 2 to 3 times the number of homicide deaths among law enforcement agencies and emergency workers, according to the National POLICE Suicide Foundation. In fact, 300 law enforcement officers end their own lives annually. It is believed that the reasons include high incidences of stress due to the nature of the job, including dealing with death or serious injury.

Because police officers project a tough exterior, they often don't seek help. This is one of the reasons why Feeling Blue is committed to providing education, like QPR training and On the Scene training, to this population. Feeling Blue recently conducted training sessions for officers from various departments in Delaware County, including Ridley Park, Brookhaven, Newton Township, Aston, Collingdale, Marple Township, Eddystone, and Upland. According to Patrolman Bobby Frazier of the Ridley Park Police Department, the program was a huge success.

Heidi Bryan and Bobby Frazier conducted four sessions over one month for 75 officers. The open forum sessions included slide presentations, discussions, and role-playing exercises to encourage participation and sharing of experiences. According to Patrolman Frazier, the trainings were effective and contributed to the problem of lack of training for police officers in this area. "We have officers who have been working for 25 years, and never had suicide training or training on how to deal with a suicide," says Frazier. "The officers were shocked when they heard the statistics and learned about the available programs." In addition to the interactive sessions, officers were provided information about local agencies the officers could turn to when they needed help. *To schedule QPR Training or On the Scene Training, contact 610-715-0076.*

Warning Signs

Symptoms of Depression

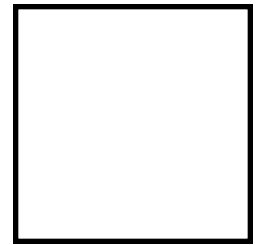
- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

Where to Get Help

- Family doctors
- Mental health specialists, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or mental health counselors
- Health maintenance organizations
- Community mental health centers
- Hospital psychiatry departments and outpatient clinics
- University- or medical school-affiliated programs
- State hospital outpatient clinics
- Family service, social agencies, or clergy
- Private clinics and facilities
- Employee assistance programs
- Local medical and/or psychiatric societies



Feeling Blue
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Important Update

Chester County Juvenile Detention Center (CCJDC) opened their new juvenile detention center, *The Swift Youth Center*, on South Wawaset Road in West Chester at a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 16, 2006. Last year, Heidi Bryan worked with Gary Blair, Director of CCJDC, to train their staff in QPR and help the students participate in the Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program, which was a big success. Kids in detention centers are at high risk for suicide. Feeling Blue will continue to provide support and QPR training to the staff of CCJDC as well as other detention centers, including the staff of their Herbert A. Shaffner Youth Center in the Harrisburg area this summer. Heidi will also visit CCJDC once a month as a speaker.

Testimonials

"Law officers do not get enough training on responding to a suicide. I decided it was time to train our officers."

"I received a tremendous amount of feedback on the QPR and On the Scene training sessions. We presented a lot of information that the officers didn't know, so it was very effective."

Patrolman Bobby Frazier
Ridley Park Police Department

Better Sleep Basics



We all know sleep deprivation can have negative effects on our bodies. But are you aware that not getting enough shut-eye can impair your mental health as well? Sleep deprivation can increase levels of stress hormones. More recently, it's also been noted that sleep disorders can actually trigger mood disorders and depression, according to *The Better Sleep Council* and the *National Mental Health Association*. If you are having trouble falling asleep, try these helpful techniques from *The Better Sleep Council*:

- Maintain a regular bed and wake time schedule, including weekends.
- Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine such as soaking in a hot bath and then reading a book or listening to soothing music.
- Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet, comfortable and cool.
- Finish eating at least two to three hours before your regular bedtime.
- Avoid nicotine, alcohol and caffeine, especially close to bedtime.

To learn more, visit www.bettersleep.org.