

News Highlights

Survivor Support Funded by State for First Time -

In June 2009, the NH Department of Health and Human Services identified funding for suicide prevention and survivor efforts in NH. In addition to funding Connect Prevention/ Intervention and Connect Postvention training for key service providers in NH, the funding will assist with the continuation of the following survivor supports: The NH Survivors of Suicide Speakers' Bureau, the NH sites for the AFSP National Survivors of Suicide Day Teleconference, Survivor packets mailed from the Medical Examiner to newly bereaved survivors, and assistance to survivors and survivor support groups.

Congressman Hodes Introduces Suicide Legislation

Congressman Paul Hodes introduced legislation that would implement a Suicide Postvention Program, such as NAMI NH's Connect, for Reservists and the National Guard. Connect's Postvention Program trains key service providers and community members to provide an integrated community response to reduce risk and promote healing in the aftermath of a suicide. Congressman Paul Hodes stated, "This program has proven successful for the NH National Guard and I believe it can be successful to prevent suicides for National Guard members and Reservists across the country."

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New Hampshire Survivors of Suicide



Newsletter 2009

Survivor Advocacy Highlights

New Hampshire Speakers' Bureau Speaks Out

The NH Survivor Speakers' Bureau gained momentum throughout the year with Michael Whitman, Laura Collins, Marsha Chappell, Lisa MacNaughton, Diane Bunnell, Liz Feingold and Dan Wells sharing their personal stories with diverse groups including the NH National Guard, NHPR's "Giving Matters", staff from several schools, college students, EMS and Police forces, cable TV and various printed newsletters.

(See page 2 - "Time to Tell" for a personal story written by a speakers' bureau participant.)



Michael Whitman (pictured above - second from the left) as he poses with his audience after telling his story to NH National Guard participants in a NAMI NH Connect Postvention Training.

For more information on becoming part of the NH Speakers' Bureau or to invite a survivor to

speaking, please contact Becky via e-mail at bmcenany@naminh.org.



Survivors Receive Volunteer Award

The Gagnon-Curtin family received the 2008 Volunteer Award at the Annual NH Suicide Prevention Conference in recognition of their work in NH to raise awareness of suicide and provide support to fellow survivors. From left to right are: Wayne Gagnon; Marie Gagnon; Becky McEnany (NAMI NH); daughter, Sara Curtin and grandson, Ethan Curtin. Missing from the picture is son-in-law, Matt Curtin.

The New Hampshire Suicide Survivors Network is a coalition of suicide survivors, joined by mental health professionals, which is helping to publicize local and national resources that provide support to survivors of suicide (SOS). The survivor network is focused on helping each other with the unique, profound, lingering grief that suicide subjects us to, and which those who have not experienced death by suicide cannot understand.

To read this newsletter online, please go to www.TheConnectProject.org

The Penates Foundation of Hampton NH Awards Grant to the NH Survivors of Suicide Speakers' Bureau

The NH SOS Speakers' Bureau was developed in May of 2008 by NAMI NH with input from survivors. It is comprised of survivors of suicide who have been trained to speak to the public safely and effectively about their loss. Members speak about the loss of their loved one, how they coped and continue to cope and what has helped/what has not helped. Survivors speak publicly about the death of their loved one as a way of educating the public and advocating for suicide prevention efforts. The grant received from the Penates Foundation will help expand this program. The funds will be used to support two speaker training programs in 2010, as well as provide support and technical assistance to speakers once they are trained.

For more information about these training programs or to invite a survivor to speak, please contact Becky McEnany via e-mail at bmcenany@NAMINH.org

Maine Provides Speaker Training for Survivors of Suicide

The Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program will the curriculum described above to provide training for Maine survivors of suicide to speak publicly about their losses. Training is anticipated in the Fall of 2009.

NH Survivors of Suicide LifeKeeper Quilt Continues to Promote Healing and Education

The quilt, made by NH families and friends of those who have died by suicide, has been exhibited at over eighty places in the past two years. If you'd like to exhibit the quilt, please contact Becky via e-mail at bmcenany@NAMINH.org



NH SURVIVORS SPEAKERS' BUREAU NEWS

*"What we have once enjoyed we can never lose.
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."*

- Helen Keller



Time To Tell

Stefan Phillip Chapple died by suicide April 23, 2002. He was 17 years old and he was my extraordinary son. Stefan suffered with depression from the age of 15 until his very sad and tragic death. Since then I have been consistently tossed around in a cyclone of emotional turmoil. Losing a loved one to suicide comes with its own set of assorted after effects. The feeling our loved one chose to leave us or didn't love us enough to stay is heartbreaking. We come to understand that our loved one was ill and cannot be held responsible for the decision to end their life. We try to grasp at the idea when we are told it is not our fault. Yet we blame ourselves, we question **everything** we did or said. Our guilt, anger and pain can sometimes completely consume us.

Survivors of suicide may try various ways to ease that pain and get support during this devastating time. Different things work for different survivors. For me, it was trial and error. I tried a Support Group which I did not like at all.

Either I was not ready or it just wasn't the right group for me. After a few months I joined an online support group that truly helped me through many shaky days and nights for almost 2 years.

I wanted to become active with NAMI early on, but found I wasn't emotionally capable to fully participate. Then, a couple of years ago NAMI offered a training program for survivors of suicide. It was a time when I felt ready and willing to actively participate in suicide education and prevention. I discovered that attendees would learn the manner of safe messaging about suicide and could be called upon to tell their personal stories. The program was most informative and it was a very warm and supportive atmosphere. Each participant wrote their story and presented it to the group. Writing my story was extremely difficult that first time and presenting it was even worse!

I have since participated in a couple of instances when a NAMI educator was doing a Postvention (in the aftermath of a suicide) Training for middle school/high school educators. Before each speaking engagement I have reworked my story improving it and having it correspond to the circumstance. Retelling Stefan's

story rips at the jagged wound in my heart and it begins to bleed once again. It exposes me in a blatantly honest way and reveals the agony Stefan and I endured through his depression and debilitating pain. Yet in a peculiar way the experiences have been cathartic. It's hard to decipher but being out there and talking about my very personal trauma is as cleansing as it is emotionally draining. My tears seem to lead me to a new clarity of thought and emotional growth. So if I can aid in preventing one suicide or spare one family the devastation and despair suicide leaves in its wake then it's more than worthwhile to me.

As many of you are aware this enduring grief can shift and change at any given moment. It has taken seven years of rough traveling to get to this particular stage in my grief. Now perhaps I can connect with that "one" person who needs to hear what I have to say. The wonderful people at NAMI have been a source of great understanding and compassion for me. I am thankful I found them and I now have strength to assist in Suicide Education and Prevention. It's all I can do and I do it lovingly, in honor of Stefan Phillip Chapple who brought sunshine and smiles to my life if only for a brief but cherished time.

Resources for Survivors of Suicide

NEW HAMPSHIRE SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUPS

Town/Location	Group Name	Times/Format	NH Contact Information
Concord National Alliance on Mental Illness NH	The Greater Concord Area Survivors of Suicide Loss Group	2nd Thursday of month 6:30-8:00 pm Peer facilitated	Lisa MacNaughton 736-8604 lisamac@metrocast.net
Exeter Seacoast Hospice	Healing After Suicide for Children and Families	Adult: 6-week closed groups offered every other month. Children: 10-week closed groups offered twice a year	1-800-416-9207
Gorham Family Resource Center	North Country SOS Support Group	Varies Peer facilitated	For more information, contact bmcenany@naminh.org 1-800-242-6264
Hampstead Hampstead Public Library	Coping with a Loved One's Suicide	Every Friday, 4:00-5:00pm	Dan Wells 329-5276 dwells5@comcast.net http://nhcopingwithsuicide.com
Keene The Samaritans, Inc.	A Safe Place	Every Thursday, 6:30-7:30pm	The Samaritans, Inc. 357-5510 www.samaritansnh.org
Lebanon Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center	Upper Valley SOS Support Group	Call for Information Peer facilitated	1-800-639-6095 (toll-free, 24/7) They will provide local leader contact info. uvsos@valley.net
Greater Nashua Area Merrimack Home Health and Hospice	The Greater Nashua Area Grieving Survivors of Suicide	1st Wednesday of month 6:30-8:00 pm Peer facilitated	Maureen Sloan 578-5966 Diane McEntee 673-7425 978-7848 (cell)
Peterborough / The Samaritans, Inc.	A Safe Place	Weekly	The Samaritans, Inc. 357-5510 www.samaritansnh.org
Plymouth Varies	Plymouth Region SOSL	Varies Peer facilitated	Marcia VanderMast 764-4352 (evenings or leave message) Sue Brothers 481-0502
Nationwide	Friends for Survival	Telephone Support	1-800-646-7322 Leave message for call back

***If you are interested in starting a SOS support group in your area or would like more information about existing groups, please contact Becky McEnany at 225-5359 or via e-mail at bmcenany@naminh.org*

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS

National Alliance on Mental Illness - New Hampshire	www.TheConnectProject.org	Click on <i>survivors</i>
American Foundation for the Prevention of Suicide (AFSP)	www.afsp.org	Click on <i>surviving suicide loss</i> for general info/on-line support
American Association of Suicidology (AAS)	www.suicidology.org	Click on <i>suicide loss survivors</i>
GriefNet—an online support group	www.griefnet.org	Click on <i>adult support groups</i> , then <i>unique losses</i>
Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network (SPAN)	www.spanusa.org	Click on <i>survivor support</i> or <i>suicide prevention & survivor resources</i>
SAVE—Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education	www.save.org	Click on <i>coping with loss</i>
Suicide Prevention Resource Network	www.sprc.org	
Before Their Time <i>Music written/performed in memory of those who died young</i>	www.beforetheirtime.org	All sales benefit hospice and suicide prevention efforts
Resources for Military and Veterans	www.taps.org	

EMERGENCY NUMBERS - For all urgent situations, call 911 or go to your local emergency room.

New Hampshire Hotlines:	National Hotlines:
The Samaritans, Inc. 24-hour Hotlines: 603-357-5505, 603-924-7000, 1-877-583-8336 (NH toll-free 24-hour hotline)	National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Headrest Teenline: 1-800-639-6095 (24-hour line)	Friends for Survival: 1-800-646-7322 (9 am-7pm PST, Noon-10 pm EST)
Headrest: 1-800-639-6095 (24 hour line)	Military Hotline: 1-800-9598277

**Do You Want to Get Involved,
but Don't Know Where to
Begin?
Here are some ideas -**

1. Attend an event (Walks, AFSP teleconference, YSPA conference).
2. Join the NH Survivor email list.
3. Participate in the Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly (YSPA).
4. Contribute to this newsletter.
5. Exhibit or transport the Lifekeeper Quilt.
6. Join the monthly survivor conference call.
7. Join the NAMI Survivor Walk Team.
8. Attend a support group or start your own.
9. Let us know about stories on suicide in your local papers.
10. Join the AFSP Survivor Outreach Program.
11. Join the NH Survivors Speaker Bureau.
12. Apply for CHH funds to start a new survivor resource.

To get involved, please contact Becky McEnany at 225-5359, or via email - bmcenany@naminh.org.



15 Green Street
Concord, NH 03301
603-225-5359
1-800-242-6264

Upcoming Survivor Events

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Hosts NH Out of the Darkness Walks

AFSP will host Out of the Darkness Walks for suicide prevention in Portsmouth on **Saturday, September 26th and October 31st** in Hanover. All proceeds will benefit AFSP's suicide prevention efforts. Complete details and registration information are available on-line at www.outofthedarkness.org

NAMI NH Raises Awareness and Funds for NH Suicide Prevention and Mental Illness

Join us as we walk together again this year to raise awareness and funding for suicide prevention and mental illness. Everyone is welcome! The walk takes place on **Sunday, October 4th** on the grounds of New Hampshire Hospital in Concord. Check-in begins at 9:30 am. www.naminh.org

“Under the Helmet:, Every Player Counts” professional quarterback and survivor Eric Hipple talks to high school and middle school students. **November 4th**, Email cynthia.j.lapointe@dartmouth.edu

2009 Suicide Prevention Conference

The Annual Conference will be held at the Loon Mountain Conference Center in Lincoln, NH on **November 6, 2009**. In addition to workshops, including a survivor workshop, nationally known survivor, speaker and professional quarterback, Eric Hipple, will tell his story. Email elizabethfl@dhhs.state.nh.us

National Survivors of Suicide Day AFSP Teleconference

Saturday, November 21st marks the 11th annual AFSP Survivors of Suicide Teleconference. With financial support from the Seacoast AFSP Chapter and the NH Department of Health and Human Services, New Hampshire will be home to six teleconference sites (Concord, Durham, Lancaster, Nashua, Portsmouth, and Westmoreland). To register, or to obtain more information, please contact Becky McEnany via email at bmcenany@naminh.org or at 225-5359. You may also watch the webcast online from your home computer; register by going to www.afsp.org.



2009/2010 NH SOS Community Calendar

(Please see information to the left for more information on these events.)

9/26: AFSP Out of Darkness Walk - Portsmouth

10/4: NAMI NH Walks - Concord

10/31: AFSP Upper Valley NH Out of Darkness Walk - Hanover

11/14: “Under the Helmet, Every Player Counts” - Concord

11/6: NH Suicide Prevention Conference, Loon Conference Center - Lincoln

11/21: AFSP National Survivors of Suicide Day Teleconference with gatherings in Concord, Durham, Lancaster, Nashua, Portsmouth and Westmoreland

Winter/Spring 2010: Public speaking for Survivors Training

August 2010: Paddlepower/Firepower - West Central Behavioral Health

The New Hampshire Suicide Survivors Network is a coalition of suicide survivors, joined by some mental health professionals, that is helping to publicize local and national resources that provide support to survivors of suicide (SOS). The survivor network is focused on helping each other with the unique, profound, lingering grief that suicide subjects us to, and which those who have not experienced death by suicide cannot understand.

New Survivor Resources

Clinicians as Survivors

Although everyone in a helping profession/capacity is impacted by a client death, it can be especially difficult for those trained to conduct risk assessments. While acknowledging that we must do a much better job at familiarizing the general population on recognizing risk factors and warning signs for suicide – many non clinician survivors report they “never saw it coming” or it happened “without warning.” By contrast, for those who have formal training in preventing suicide, the impact of a suicide death can be particularly devastating.

Clinicians who lose a client, friend or family member to suicide are often profoundly impacted. Any clinician and or supervisor who has been through this experience will tell you it can be a defining moment during a career. It has been described as “the most profoundly disturbing event of a professional career” (Hendin et. Al 2000). Clinicians go through many of the same grief reactions as family members such as shock, denial, and bewilderment and often guilt, shame, regret and self blame as well. Research indicates that in severe situations the clinician can have intrusive and reoccurring thoughts which can persist and rise to the level of a Post Traumatic Stress reaction.

Few resources are available specifically for clinicians who survive a suicide death. NAMI NH's Connect Suicide Prevention Project has postvention training for mental health providers which includes specific protocols for client suicides for organizations as well as private providers. Nationally, the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) has a user group to share information and support. This group is moderated by Nina Gutin and Vanessa McGann who are both psychologists/survivors and whose work and advocacy in this have increased awareness and decreased stigma in this area and from which a lot of the information in this article is drawn. For more information on this user group go to: http://mypage.iusb.edu/~jmcintos/therapists_mainpg.htm.

(To read this article by Kenneth Norton, LICSW in it's entirety, please go to www.naminh.org.)

Greater Nashua Area Grieving Survivors of Suicide Support Group

By Maureen Sloan

It's been almost a year now that the Nashua area Survivors of Suicide have met at the Home Health and Hospice office on Continental Blvd in Merrimack.

There is, unfortunately, a need in this area of New Hampshire to have such a gathering place. Loved ones of those who have died by suicide can meet and be supported by each other.

Each month, at least one new person has attended this small intimate group, some returning often, just to be with those who have experienced the same type of grief.

Diane McEntee and I had the opportunity to attend an intensive training workshop on “grief after suicide” sponsored by AFSP, The American Foundation of Suicide Prevention and NAMI, The National Alliance for Mental Illness. Deb Pelletier, the bereavement co-coordinator of Home Health and Hospice, has also been a tremendous support.

The meetings are informal, but with guidelines, which offer a safe place for sharing, listening and especially compassion. The goal is to continue our journey with courage and hope for meaning in our lives as we progress and yes, regress at times, on this mission to live well.....

”To speak your name and share your story, for we are the caretakers of your memory.”

Samaritans Update

Newly hired Executive Director, Christine Brehms, plans to increase the number of Samaritans survivor support groups, adding a new group in Peterborough to the already existing Keene group. Both groups will meet weekly and are open format. Samaritans also unveiled a new Facebook page in August of 2009 to increase participation and communication with survivors. Samaritans will again collaborate with AFSP, NAMI and DHHS to host an AFSP teleconference site in Westmoreland, NH. For more information on any of their programs, please go to www.samaritansnh.org

SUPPORT FOR YOUTH

The following is a list of websites and groups in NH that assist with children's grief, but are not necessarily specific to suicide loss.

NATIONAL

Survivors Road2Healing.com Resources for Children and Teens specific to suicide loss , <http://www.road2healing.com/children.html>

GriefNet - an online general grief support group for kids and teens. www.griefnet.org

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Bridges for Children and Teens- Seacoast Hospice Exeter, NH, 603-778-7391, <http://www.seacoasthospice.org/grief/bridges.cfm>

Children's Good Grief Program, Home Health & Hospice Care Nashua, NH, 800-887-5973, http://www.hhhc.org/servicesupport_groups.php

GAPS (Grieving Assistance Program for Children) & Camp Purple Parachute Victims, Inc Rochester, NH, 603-335-7777, www.victimsinc.org

Mountain of Hope, Center Ossipee, NH , 603-569-2729 Ext 230, http://www.vnahospice.net/news_events.htm

Pete's Place - Wentworth-Douglass Hospital Dover, NH, 603-740-2689, <http://www.wdhospital.com/body.cfm?id=181>

Stepping Stones - VNA of Manchester & Southern NH, Inc., Manchester, NH, 603-663-4005, www.manchestervna.org/hospice_support_groups.asp

Catherine Greenleaf to Produce CD to Promote Healing

NH resident Catherine Greenleaf has produced a positive affirmation spoken word CD with healing music, designed to rebuild one's self-esteem after a suicide loss. The title is **TODAY, I AM HEALING**. <http://www.healingthehurtspirit.com>.



Survivor Contributions

HOLIDAY SUGGESTIONS

The holidays are difficult for all who have lost a loved one to suicide, but especially so for the newly bereaved survivor. Over time, the sadness becomes less overwhelming but it is always there with the holidays often triggering specific memories. Many survivors have found it helps to have a holiday plan and some consider changing or starting new family traditions. Here are some suggestions from other survivors:

- Take care of yourself. Pamper yourself, eat, sleep, and exercise as normally as possible, plan to be with people you are comfortable with, let yourself grieve and accept help from others.
- Set priorities and limits. Give yourself permission to do only what is most important to you-others will understand.
- You may want to make changes in your traditions or start new traditions, These may include being away from home, not hanging stockings, changing the traditional meal, decorating a live tree to plant in the spring, serving a meal at a homeless shelter, giving a gift to a charity that your loved one supported, joining friends to share their traditions and support, etc.
- Include your loved one in discussions. Let your relatives and friends know that you would like to talk about your loved one. They are likely missing him/her, too. Many people are afraid to speak your loved one's name for fear of hurting you or bringing up painful memories and will appreciate your guidance.
- Attend the AFSP National Survivors of Suicide Day Teleconference on the Saturday before Thanksgiving to share support with other survivors. (See calendar on page 4 for NH sites or register to watch on line at www.afsp.org).
- Attend a support group and ask other survivors for suggestions that have helped them through the holidays.



Learning from Suicide

by Laura Collins

This article is for survivors and those trying to help survivors move forward after a suicide. The suicide of a loved one can be the most devastating event in one's life. In the wake of such loss it is often difficult to appreciate and embrace life again. Suicide can have a paralyzing effect on those left behind. Time and plans can lose significance. Worldwide, one million people die by suicide each year. They leave behind many more survivors, each suffering their own unique loss. Survivors bear much in common and can learn from one another. As a survivor myself, I share a few thoughts that may offer help to others in moving on and learning to embrace life.

Aftermath. The first few months after a suicide a survivor's world is in turmoil. Getting out of bed or performing the most mundane of chores can be a struggle. I still recall that for weeks after my sister's death I operated only by going through the motions. Nothing meant anything. With time, however, going through the motions gets easier and energy returns. Each survivor reacts differently. Expect some disengagement from life and gradual return to activities. Survivors may need encouragement for even simple things, like a shower. Encourage routines and extend invitations to survivors.

Say Something. Many people avoid survivors because they do not know what to say or do. This is not helpful; a survivor does not need isolation. Say what is in your heart and do what you have always done together. Express sympathy if you feel it. You should also treat a survivor like a regular person, because they are. If you used to get together for lunch or a hike, suggest it-it may be just what they need. Survivors often have a flurry of visitors for a short time after the death, then they taper off. A survivor's loss is not so short-lived though. They need for you to reach out to them for months after a death.

Mementos. They leave with little or no warning and no goodbyes, so pictures, belongings and remembrances have special significance. When there are few mementos they are cherished even more. It may be surprising what bears significance to a survivor. For a child who lost a sibling, it may be a favorite hand-me-down or a movie watched together. Allow survivors an opportunity to locate those little things that are precious. If you are a family member of the deceased and have their possessions, you may be able to pass something on to another survivor of great significance.

Reminisce. Most survivors appreciate an opportunity to reminisce. They often think frequently about their lost loved one. Reminiscing provides opportunity to share positive memories. For a survivor that keeps a lot inside, hearing others open up can be gratifying and healing.

A Mother's Letter

by Connie Cuddemi

Dear Joe,

Is there a heaven? Is it as beautiful and loving as you were taught it was? I hope you are at peace, mentally and physically. I see you whole - not remembering the pain in your mind and body. I hope you are with a dog, living in a cabin in the wild - a brook running past your home - fishing swimming or wading with your dog. Beautiful trees, birds and quiet. You've built stone walls as the old men would have in the past. The talent you have - I have a picture of you and your dog - looking at me as if you could come to me - a bear hug - a wonderful smile, black eyes. You look so happy. I have to believe you are. It looks like you could come to me and give me a kiss.

Are the stars really openings in heaven where our love shines through to let me know you are happy? Is heaven the way we expected here to be, meaning here is actually hell? I've been told that God does not give us any more than we can handle. I can not handle any more. I believe I have passed the test.

*I love you so much and miss you -
Mom*