



2016 New Hampshire Survivors of Suicide Loss Newsletter

(Now available online at: <http://bit.ly/1G3kdb3>)

ACCEPTANCE

I know you are
always with me –
You are never far away.
Although I understand
why you left,
I still wish you would
have stayed.
Some people say it was
a selfish act,
But I have to disagree,
If you were here you'd
be suffering,
And I'd rather your
spirit be free.
I believe I would be
the selfish one,
To want you here
in pain.
Memories of you
I'll cherish,
And I won't let you
die in vain.
So when life becomes
overwhelming,
And I don't know
what to do...
I'll say a prayer,
And wait for you
to see me through.
I've accepted it
as your decision.
Myself I can
no longer blame.
I know you wanted
your pain to end,
And remember, I love
you just the same.
*By: Unknown Loss
Survivor*

Another Banner Year for the Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL) Sub-Committee!



NH Suicide Prevention Council

(SOSL) Sub-Committee is working to ensure that the voice of survivors of suicide loss is woven throughout the plan, helping to guide the SPC's work and continue to strengthen the loss survivor network here in New Hampshire.

The word is spreading – more loss survivors and their families are recognizing that there is support for them. Capacity for support groups across the state continues to grow with more loss survivors accessing critical support than ever before.

The SOSL Sub-Committee is a dedicated team of loss survivors and stakeholders who volunteer and advocate for all loss survivors in NH. The past year has been a busy one with 1,932 volunteer hours completed by loss survivors who facilitated support groups, attended walks, hosted 11 American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Survivor Day sites, shared their stories at events through the SurvivorVoices Speakers' Bureau, worked on the Suicide Prevention Conference, served on sub-committees of the SPC, and volunteered at numerous loss survivor events.

Congratulations and Thank You for all that you do! So many people have and will continue to benefit from the great work that you do to help others!

Have you thought of volunteering to help make a difference? Would you like to advocate for loss survivors, help raise awareness for suicide prevention, share your voice and work with fellow loss survivors? Please contact Co-chairs Susan Morrison and Debbie Baird at www.sosl4nhspc@gmail.com, or call (603) 545-7267 for more information.

The New Hampshire Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL) Network is a coalition of people bereaved by suicide loss. They are joined by concerned mental health professionals and community members, who help to publicize local and national resources that provide support to Survivors of Suicide Loss. The network is focused on helping those bereaved by suicide with the profound, lingering grief that suicide leaves in its wake, and which those who have not experienced cannot fully understand. This newsletter was made possible through Team SOS, the Shawn Doherty Golf Tournament, 6th Annual Ryan Hicks Foundation Golf Tournament, Stephen Morgenstern Memorial Golf Tournament, New England Leather Fest, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, and the many donors who have made contributions in memory of loved ones lost to suicide. The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of our funders.



Building Capacity for SOSL Support Groups!

One of the major objectives for the Survivors of Suicide Loss Sub-Committee for the SPC is to continue building capacity for SOSL support groups throughout New Hampshire. Since 2014, and with the help of NAMI New Hampshire, six new support groups have been established. Two of the newest are in Lancaster and Laconia – areas that have recently been successful in establishing this needed support!

Recent efforts to sustain and build capacity include monthly conference calls to support all group facilitators and a special refresher class to discuss and role play the concerns and challenges that arise within the diversity of each group. It's very important that facilitators feel supported, practice their own self-care, and know help is available for them and their support groups.



Deb Baird and Susan Morrison,
Co-chairs of the SOSL Sub-committee
(SPC) at the NAMI Walk with Team SOS

Team SOS at NAMI Walk

Two NH Support Groups Celebrate Milestones This Year!

Hampstead's Coping with a Loved One's Suicide Group Celebrates 25 years!

Congratulations to the first SOSL Support Group in NH that has been meeting on a weekly basis for a quarter century! Originally founded through the Center for Life Management in Derry in 1991, the group moved to Hampstead over a decade ago. As one of the first support groups for survivors of suicide loss in NH, the group has helped over 100 families navigate the difficult path of grief due to suicide over the years. Currently facilitated by loss survivors, Dan and Roger Wells, the group meets every Friday from 4 to 5 p.m. at the Hampstead Public Library.

Contact Dan Wells at dwells@sau81.org for more information.

Lebanon's Upper Valley Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group Marks 22 Years!

The Upper Valley Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group (UVSOSL) serves western NH and eastern VT. Originally conceived when Gina Sonne, who worked at hospice and facilitated a bereavement support group recognized the great need, started a support group for survivors of suicide loss. Through the years, Gina, Sue Hagerman, Michael Whitman, and Maris Noble have facilitated at one time or another, never wavering in their commitment to support loss survivors through the pain of losing their loved one(s) to suicide. This dynamic support group has evolved over the many years, now having merged with West Central Behavioral Health, a move well-suited to the community and their loss survivor support network.

Current co-facilitators Michael Whitman (loss survivor) and Duff Munford (retired psychiatrist) meet the 2nd Thursday of the month from 6-7 p.m. at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. For more information email uvsosl@valley.net, or call (603) 448-0126, ext. 2180.

SOSL support groups give loss survivors strength to build a foundation for their “new normal”, helping each other heal, cope, and continue their search for hope in their healing journey. The stigma, guilt, and shame that can sometimes prevent loss survivors from moving forward can be greatly alleviated through one-on-one support and support groups. For this reason, building capacity for more SOSL support groups is more important than ever. Thank you goes to all SOSL groups in NH!

For more information and updates on SOSL support groups or interest in facilitating or starting a support group please contact Debbie Baird at dbaird@naminh.org.

First Teen Survivor of Suicide Loss Support Group in New Hampshire!

In early fall 2015, Erica Sherman, a senior at Bedford High School and a loss survivor, approached me at NAMI NH to work with her on her senior project. She wanted to raise awareness for suicide prevention with teens and to “Start the Conversation”: talking about suicide prevention and suicide loss. Erica’s end goal for this project was to start a Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group for Teens.

When, at the age of 12, Erica lost her Dad, she didn’t have anyone other than her Mom to whom to turn for support. She wasn’t ashamed of what happened, but rather the opposite – she wanted to talk about her loss with others her age, who had also lost a loved one to suicide, but didn’t know how to go about doing so.



Erica Sherman

You Are Not Alone! A support group for Teen Survivors of Suicide Loss (Ages 14-18) was the first ever such group in NH. Erica recognized that it might take a few months for it to catch on, but her can do attitude would not allow her give up. On May 19, 2016, Erica was able to experience exactly what she had hoped for, to start the conversation amongst teens about the loved one(s) they have lost to suicide. It was a success!

Senior project completed, Erica graduated from Bedford High School. She is on her way to attend Washington University in Washington, D.C., where she will study in some capacity in the legal field. She continues her SOSL efforts – keeping the conversation on suicide prevention and suicide loss going in D.C., while still helping to find other facilitators to keep the “You Are Not Alone” group going here in NH.

Erica is an amazing young lady with tremendous potential and passion. As her mentor, I feel I’m the lucky one for having worked with her.



Loss Survivor family and their team run to reduce stigma and raise awareness for mental illness and suicide prevention to honor their love ones lost to suicide at the Annual Barrington NH Chamber of Commerce Peepers Run.

Every fall, people who are passionate about mental illness and suicide prevention walk to raise awareness and funds at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s community walks in Portsmouth, Nashua and Concord, along with the Annual NAMIWalks NH in Concord. These walks are wonderful opportunities to connect with other loss survivors and raise awareness. Monies raised at the AFSP Walk fund national and local suicide prevention and education efforts. Funds raised at the NAMIWalks NH support efforts around mental illness, suicide prevention and loss survivor supports here NH.



NAMIWalks NH, loss survivors are welcome to join Team SOS or start their own team to walk in memory of a loved one. All are welcome to participate whether or not they choose to raise money – there is no registration fee. To date, in addition to the programs supported by other NAMI NH loss survivor teams, funds raised by Team SOS have specifically funded the following:

- The annual Survivors of Suicide Loss Newsletters,
- 250-300 folders of resources for new Survivors of Suicide Loss,
- A healing workshop at the NH Suicide Prevention Conference,
- Faces of Awareness button maker and supplies,
- 20 scholarships for loss survivors to attend the NH Suicide Prevention Conference, and
- Hotel accommodations for SurvivorVoices attendees traveling from a distance.



Do You Want to Get Involved, but Don't Know Where to Begin?

Here are some ideas:

Attend

- Walks
- AFSP Survivor Day
- NH Suicide Prevention Conference
- Paddle Power

Join

- NH SOSL Email list
- NH Survivors Speakers Bureau
- SOSL Sub-committee for the State Suicide Prevention Council (SPC)
- Another SPC Sub-committee
- A Suicide Prevention Coalition

Participate

- Facilitate, start, or join a support group
- Exhibit or transport a Survivor Quilt
- Contribute to the SOSL Newsletter
- Share your story through public advocacy

Share

- Stories on suicide in your local paper
- How Community Health and Healing Funds help

For more information, contact Debbie Baird:
dbaird@naminh.org

Sharing From the Heart!

Stories of suicide loss told from the heart are powerful. They promote healing for those who are newly bereaved, educate the public about how to support survivors of suicide loss, and increase awareness of suicide risk factors and warning signs.

Earlier this year, loss survivor speakers from the NAMI NH SurvivorVoices Speakers Bureau met for a refresher training.

Together, they participated in a brainstorming session to help build confidence to speak and adapt their stories to different audiences.

Speakers quickly recognized through this session that attending each other's speaking engagements would be wonderful moral support and further help build their confidence to share their story. Another portion of this class helped speakers hone their skills to advocate on important issues, such as mental illness and suicide prevention, and help adapt their stories for different audiences.

Those who attended left this refresher class feeling more confident about speaking in areas where they were not as comfortable before. All the participants were reminded of just how powerful and important their stories about their loved ones are.

This year alone, over 35 speaking engagements have been provided to diverse audiences at events that include suicide postvention trainings, walks, suicide prevention conference, business organizations, community centers, peer support groups, medical and mental health centers, visiting nurses associations, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Survivor Day, and advocacy.

Law Enforcement Reaching Out To Survivors of Suicide Loss in NH!

In 2015, a Goffstown Police Officer and their Chaplain attended a Suicide Postvention Training so they could learn how to better serve their community and help others after a suicide death. A loss survivor speaker who also attended this training heard the compassion that these officers have for loss survivors. "It's sometimes very difficult for us to conduct the investigation and [we] want to help families who are really suffering from this tragic loss," stated the Officer.

Most law enforcement do understand the disbelief and shock that overwhelms loss survivors during this time, and agree that loss survivors deserve the best and most accurate answers they can give during the investigation – and that comfort and care should come with it. "We need to invest more in loss survivors," agreed both the Officer and the Chaplain.

Out of this meeting, a workshop called "Both Sides of the Door" was created with both Goffstown police officers and a loss survivor presenting it at the 2015 Suicide Prevention Conference. The workshop highlights that most law enforcement officers do care and want to help – and it's important that loss survivors in NH know this.

Like so many other members of law enforcement, the Laconia Police Department (LPD) understands and recognizes the importance of helping loss survivors following a suicide death and during the investigation. The LPD, along with several key stakeholders, developed a protocol for officers to use when responding to and investigating a suicide death. The protocol gives them a better understanding of the sensitivity of the situation, appropriate wording to use, and highlights that giving comfort and care to loss survivors includes providing the most accurate answers possible during an investigation.

The relationships and learning that led to the "Both Sides of the Door" workshop has evolved into a new session "We've Opened the Door" to be offered at the 2016 State of NH Suicide Prevention Conference. Part of the workshop will highlight the protocol and how it has now become a prototype that will be given to the new police officer recruits during their Suicide Postvention Trainings at the Police Standards and Training Council, as well as future distribution to law enforcement throughout NH.



NH SOSL Quilts



**Lieutenant Rich Simmons
Laconia Police Department**

NH Survivors of Suicide Loss Events... Some highlights from this past year!

Thank you to the many NH Loss Survivors who volunteer every day to reach out to new survivors, offer expertise on committees, provide support and facilitate support groups, display the NH Life Keeper Memory Quilts, host and participate in fundraising and awareness events, advocate for suicide prevention, submit writing and photos for the newsletter, help with trainings, and share their personal stories to raise awareness and promote healing. YOU ARE ALL GREATLY APPRECIATED!



Compassionate Friends Garden Social



*5th Annual
Memorial Tree
Lighting honoring
our loved ones
who have passed
on before us.*



Portsmouth Out of Darkness Walk for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

NH Survivors of Suicide Loss Events... Continued highlights from this past year!



Laconia NH hosting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) International Survivor Day

Promoting Self-Care and Healing, by Catherine Greenleaf

Catherine Greenleaf, a survivor of multiple losses, is the author of *Healing the Hurt Spirit: Daily Affirmations for Survivors of Suicide Loss*. Catherine is a longtime non-denominational spiritual director and a member of the Association for Death Education and Counseling. Well known nationally for her expertise in survivor grief, she is currently in the middle of her next book due for publication later in 2016. Below is an excerpt from her new book on self-care that she wished to share. When her new book is released we will update the resource book list for loss survivors on the www.theconnectprogram.org website.



Catherine Greenleaf

7 Skills for Surviving Suicide Loss

- **ASK FOR HELP** - Don't be afraid to ask.
- **KNOW YOUR LIMITS** - It's important to know your limitations and take action to protect yourself.
- **CREATE A COMFORT ZONE** - Make one safe place you can go any time you are feeling stressed, anxious or overwhelmed.
- **MAKE THE CLOCK YOUR FRIEND** - Give yourself the precious gift of stability.
- **WRITE IT DOWN** - A journal can become your trusted confidante. Anything goes - a wonderful freedom comes from completely being honest.
- **KEEP THE FAITH** - With loss like suicide, it's easy to feel our faith (whatever we believe in) has abandoned us. Sometimes we have to lose our faith in order to find it again.
- **UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES** - The more you educate yourself about suicide and its aftermath on family and friends, the better able you will be to protect yourself and those you love.

Survivor of Suicide Loss Calendar 2016/2017

Often loss survivors find that attending these activities helps them to connect with other survivors and, as time goes on, many find involvement in advocacy efforts help in their own healing.



November 4, 2016:

13th Annual New Hampshire Suicide Prevention Conference

Offering a variety of workshops and plenary sessions for anyone interested in suicide prevention. Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL) are encouraged to attend. Keep in mind this day can be difficult for loss survivors with recent loss. SOSL scholarships are available. For more information please contact Debbie Baird at dbaird@naminh.org.

November 19, 2016: AFSP

Annual International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Held each year the Saturday before Thanksgiving. To attend a location in New Hampshire, host a future site or watch the webcast online, please go to www.afsp.org and/or for more information, please contact Debbie Baird at dbaird@naminh.org.

December 2016:

Compassionate Friends Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting

St. Anthony of Padua Church, 172 Belmont St., Manchester, NH. Join members and loved ones as they celebrate their children, siblings, and grandchildren (lost to any cause). For more information, please contact Shirley Cote at Scote98@comcast.net or www.tcfmanchester.org.

April 2017:

Annual Compassionate Friend's Blood Drive of Manchester and Nashua

Each year this blood drive helps to honor children, siblings, and grandchildren by giving the gift of life in their memory. Many Survivors of Suicide Loss help to participate in this drive. For more information, please contact: Shirley Cote at scote98@comcast.net.

August 19 and 20, 2017:

14th Annual Paddle Power, Lebanon

Join the West Central Behavioral Health Center in Lebanon by attending their river adventure fundraiser. Paddle your way 25 miles down the Connecticut River to draw awareness to the tragedy of suicide. Proceeds support the 24/7 emergency crisis intervention services offered to the community by the center. For more information, call (603) 448-0126.

September 2017:

6th Annual Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony, Concord

In recognition of mental illness and suicide prevention awareness, a tree lighting ceremony was established by survivors of suicide loss to remember our loved ones lost to any cause. Light bulbs may be purchased and proceeds support NAMI NH. Contact: Debbie Baird, dbaird@naminh.org or Jenn Klember, jennklember@gmail.com.

September 2017:

Annually, close to Labor Day,

Rail Trail Ramble, Lebanon

Help support NH's Crisis/Suicide

Hotline by joining the walk/bike ride to raise funds for Headrest, Inc. Headrest answers National Suicide Prevention Lifeline calls for NH (800) 273-8255, provides the Upper Valley's 24/7 Crisis Hotline, and offers addiction and crisis services for those who do not have the ability to pay. For more information, call (603) 448-4872, or email ed.rajsteter@headrest.org.

September 3-9, 2017:

43rd Annual National Suicide Prevention Week

Please go to www.naminh.org for more information about events in New Hampshire.

September 16, 2017:

Compassionate Friends Annual Garden Social/Walk to Remember, Manchester.

A special day where members join together with family and friends in a beautiful Children's Butterfly Garden to celebrate and remember all children, siblings and grandchildren. For more information contact www.tcfmanchester.org.

September – October 2017:

American Foundation For Suicide Prevention (AFSP), Out of Darkness Walks (dates TBD)

Raise awareness and funds that allow the AFSP to invest in new research, educational programs, advocate for public policy and support survivors of suicide loss. For more information contact:

Portsmouth Walk, Ken LaValley, (603) 862-4343

Nashua Walk, Jen Miller, (603) 506-4980

Concord Walk, Heather Zyliak, (603) 545-4470

October 1, 2017:

15th Annual NAMI Walks NH, Concord

Join NAMI NH in the largest stigma busting statewide event for mental health advocacy and suicide prevention in New Hampshire. Funds raised at this walk stay in NH to help fund mental health advocacy, suicide prevention efforts, and Survivors of Suicide Loss outreach and support. Meet other Loss Survivors, join TEAM SOS or form your own walk team. All are welcome – registration is free. For more information or to register, visit www.naminh.org or call (603) 225-5359.

October 1-8, 2017:

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) Statewide

In 1990, Congress established the first week of October as MIAW in recognition of NAMI's efforts to raise mental illness awareness. Please go to www.naminh.org for more information about events around New Hampshire.

**For more calendar events through the year,
Please go to www.theconnectprogram.org and www.naminh.org.**

RESOURCES FOR NH SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS

NH SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS SUPPORT GROUPS

For updated contacts, group times, and locations, please go to www.naminh.org, click on support.

CONCORD – Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group, contact: Janyce Demers, (603) 860-8490, didorun@myfairpoint.net or Debbie Baird, (603) 545-7267, dbaird@naminh.org

DURHAM – Survivors of Suicide Loss Group, contact: Sean & Amy, sosldurhamnh@gmail.com

HAMPSTEAD – Coping with A Loved One to Suicide Group, contact: Dan Wells (603) 553-0119, dwells@sau81.org

KEENE – A Safe Place SOSL Support Group, contact: Penny / Carmen, (603) 357-5510, pc@samaritansnh.org

LACONIA – Winnepesaukee Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group, contact: Stacey Elliott, (603) 512-2208 or Jennifer Hart, (603) 396-0551

LANCASTER – North Country Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group, contact: Sara Cotter, (603) 631-5629, or Richard Cotter, (603) 219-8912

LEBANON – Upper Valley Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group, counties served Western NH and Eastern VT, contact: uvsosl@valley.net or (603) 448-0126, ext. 2180

MANCHESTER – Survivors of Suicide Loss Group, Contact: Marsha Chapple, (603) 232-7606, mahshah@comcast.net

MANCHESTER – VNA Suicide Bereavement Support Group, contact: Chuck Johnson, (603) 663-4005, cjohnson@elliot-hs.org

MANCHESTER – Community & Active Military/Veteran's Loss Survivor Support Group, contact: Loren Haberski, (603) 624-4366, ext. 2150

GREATER NASHUA AREA – Merrimack Survivors of Suicide Loss, contact: Diane McEntee, (603) 673-7425, dmcentee1415@gmail.com, or Maureen Sloan, (603) 578-5966, maureendsloan@gmail.com

NORTH CONWAY – Survivors of Suicide contact: Denise Leighton, (603) 356-2324, denise@vaughannh.com

PLYMOUTH – Plymouth Survivors of Suicide Loss Group, contact: Wendy Hills, (603) 443-3880, wlhills@plymouth.edu

PORTSMOUTH – Portsmouth Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group, contact: Paul Noyes, getsomeshelter@hotmail.com, (603) 770-2987 or Candace Stiteler, (603) 868-2970

YOUTH GRIEF RESOURCES

CHILDREN'S Good Grief Program – Merrimack, (800) 887-5973, www.hhhc.org

INTERNET RESOURCES - Survivors Road2Healing.com www.road2healing.org & The Dougy Center – www.dougy.org

STEPPING STONES - MANCHESTER, NH Bereavement Support Team at (603) 622-3781, www.elliiothosp.org

ORGANIZATIONS

Bereaved Parents of the USA – Bereaved Parents of the USA is an organization of families who have grieved the death of a child of any age. NH Chapter, www.bereavedparentsusa.org, (603) 887-4302

Compassionate Friends – Provides mutual support for parents who have experienced the death of a child (by any means) (877) 969-0010, www.compassionatefriends.org

Hospice Bereavement Support Groups – Many hospices in NH offer general & specific grief groups. Listings can be found at www.nhhpc.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness – NH – Provides outreach & support to NH loss survivor network, www.theconnectprogram.org, www.naminh.org, (800) 242-6264

Victims, Inc. – Offers one on one and group support to families in NH after a traumatic event. www.victimsinc.org, (603) 335-7777

MUSIC

The following CDs were produced by survivors for survivors:

Before Their Time – www.beforetheirtime.org, (603) 795-4435

Chaos of the Heart – www.musicforthesoul.org, (877) 214-7703

BOOKS

NH residents can access many books on suicide at the NH family Resource Connection at the State Library free of charge. A list of available books can be found at www.theconnectprogram.org or by calling (800) 298-4321 New Hampshire survivor of suicide loss Catherine Greenleaf has published **Healing the Hurt Spirit: Daily affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide**, St. Dymphna Press, Andover, NH.

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) – www.nami.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness NH (NAMI NH) – www.naminh.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) – www.afsp.org

Grief Net (Online Support Groups) – www.griefnet.org

SAVE – Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education – www.save.org

Suicide Prevention Resource Center – www.sprc.org

The Samaritans, Inc. (NH) – pc@samaritans.org

NEW HAMPSHIRE HOTLINES

Teen Hotline – (877) 583-TEEN

Headrest Teenline – (800) 639-6095

NATIONAL HOTLINES

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal call 911 or the

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

(800) 273-TALK (8255) answered locally in NH by Headrest

For Military: Call (800) 273-TALK (8255), press 1

For Support in Spanish: (888) 628-9454

Friends For Survival (National): (800) 646-7322



NAMI New Hampshire

85 North State Street, Concord, NH 03301
(603) 225-5359 ~ 1(800) 242-6264
www.naminh.org ~ www.TheConnectProgram.org