Suicide Survivors
Speakers Bureau
As Eileen McNamara, a writer for the *Boston Globe*, said, “Suicide remains the sorrow that still struggles to speak its name” (McNamara, 12/11/07). However, survivors in New Hampshire are trying to change the stigma surrounding suicide by speaking out and sharing their own stories in hopes that it will encourage someone to get help, will let other survivors know that they are not alone and that help is out there, and to let the public know warning signs and resources. Seven NH survivors participated in a two-day training sponsored by NAMI and on the second day, they presented to each other, received feedback, and honed their messages. If you have an event at which you would like a survivor to speak, or you wish to participate in a future training, please contact Becky McEnany by email at bmcenany@naminh.org.

NH Survivor Works with Prison System to Effect Changes to Prevent Suicide
Connie Cuddemi sued the NH State Prison when her son died by suicide after having been admitted less than 24 hours earlier. Rather than view her as an adversary, after the law suit was settled and both physical and policy changes were made at the prison, Warden Richard Gerry invited Cuddemi back to see the changes they had made. Cuddemi praised Gerry and prison officials for the extra effort she has observed in their desire to keep prisoners safe and reduce suicides of individuals who are incarcerated. As a result of these efforts, all prisoners will be screened (asked questions about previous history of suicide or current suicidal thoughts) when they are admitted.

Here is Connie’s story in her own words:
I returned a call to my son, Joe. Someone answered, “Wait a minute,” and then the phone was hung up. Each time I called, there was no answer. My doorbell rang. Police officers asked if Joe was my son. The officer came in—I was feeling such panic. I was told, “Your son, Joe, was brought to the state prison and, within a short time, Joe hung himself.”

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.
William J. Clinton did not suffer from a mental health disorder but may have been vulnerable to suicide due to his experiences, including his service in the Vietnam War and later his role as President of the United States.

Joe had bipolar illness, a condition characterized by episodes of depression and mania. It is a significant mental health disorder that requires ongoing management and medication. The family's goal is to bring attention to suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

Survivors Provide Testimony to Support SB 390 and SB 359
Two bills that will have significant positive impact on suicide prevention efforts in New Hampshire were recently signed into law by Governor Lynch. SB 390, sponsored by Senator Kathleen Sgambati, will legislatively establish a state Suicide Prevention Council. With moving testimony from Representative Roger Wells and others, SB 390 passed both the House and Senate, and was signed by the governor on June 26. SB 359, relative to health curriculum for schools, has been amended (thanks to Rep. Wells) to require schools to include suicide prevention as part of their health education for high school students. SB 359 was signed by the governor on June 24.

WMUR Suicide Prevention PSAs Feature Local Survivors
In a collaborative effort with the Communications Committee of the NH Suicide Prevention Council, WMUR Channel 9 developed and aired two suicide prevention Public Service Announcements (PSAs) last fall. One of the PSAs featured NH survivors Wayne and Marie Gagnon speaking about the death of their son, Joe, and encouraging help seeking and recognizing warning signs. To view the PSAs on the web, please go to http://www.naminh.org/SuicidePreventionPSAs.php.

Survivor Advocacy Highlights (continued)

Prison
(continued from page 1)
I was crying—the pain was unbearable—many downs and a few ups. Time sadly went on… Strength, time to check on terms I made with the prison to never have this happen again. The area where Joe died has been completely reconstructed—eliminating hazards and adding cameras so the staff can see the area. Intake staff is now using screening protocols and taking mental health classes. I was asked to write a letter to the class for prison intake staff about my son’s death, which was horrific. The safety issues were not in place. I am hopeful that these classes will keep them updated on all the positive ways to help the men, understand mental health disorders, and learn about effective medications. The Mental Health Department will [inform] the staff of any new safety information. Seeing these changes has lifted the terror from my mind. I feel wonderful helping to bring about these changes.

Joe had bipolar illness. I miss him every day. But what is happening now in his name will keep everyone informed and safe. Prison staff is learning to look at the prisoners coming in to intake as people with many mental health issues. Safety for all.

I am a survivor. Changes are happening in Joe’s name. It feels wonderful to make changes. I am not finished.

~Connie Cuddemi

Submitted by Connie Cuddemi
## Resources for Survivors of Suicide

### New Hampshire Survivors of Suicide Support Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town/Location</th>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Times/Format</th>
<th>NH Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concord</td>
<td>Concord Area SOS Group</td>
<td>2nd Thursday of month 6:30-8:30 pm Peer facilitated</td>
<td>Sue Hill 435-5365 <a href="mailto:suehillnh@hotmail.com">suehillnh@hotmail.com</a> Lisa MacNaughton 758-8604 (evenings and weekends) <a href="mailto:lisamac@metrocast.net">lisamac@metrocast.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Healing after Suicide for Children and Families</td>
<td>Adult: 6-week closed groups 2 times/year Children: 10-week, spring and fall Peer facilitated</td>
<td>Elaine Wiesman 778-7391 1-800-416-9207 <a href="mailto:ewiesman@seacoasthospital.org">ewiesman@seacoasthospital.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorham</td>
<td>North Country SOS Support Group</td>
<td>2nd Thursday of month 7:00-9:00 pm Peer facilitated</td>
<td>Diane Bunnell 752-5984 (evenings or leave message)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton</td>
<td>Coping with a Loved One's Suicide</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Dan Wells 329-5276 <a href="mailto:Dwells5@comcast.net">Dwells5@comcast.net</a> <a href="http://nhcopingwithsuicide.com">http://nhcopingwithsuicide.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keene</td>
<td>Safe Place Suicide Support Group</td>
<td>8-week closed groups, spring and fall; &quot;Surviving the holidays&quot; support group meets the weekend before Thanksgiving through the first week after January 1.</td>
<td>The Samaritans, Inc. 357-5510 <a href="http://www.samaritansnh.org">www.samaritansnh.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Upper Valley SOS Support Group</td>
<td>2nd and 4th Thursday of month 4:30 pm Peer facilitated</td>
<td>1-800-639-6095 (toll-free, 24/7) <a href="mailto:uvsos@valley.net">uvsos@valley.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Nashua Area</td>
<td>The Greater Nashua Area Grieving Survivors of Suicide</td>
<td>1st Wednesday of month 6:30-8:00 pm Peer facilitated</td>
<td>320-0472 Leave message for call back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Conway</td>
<td>SOS Bereavement Group</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Rev. Anne Roser 356-7827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth</td>
<td>Plymouth Region SOSL</td>
<td>2nd Tuesday of month 7:00-9:00 pm Peer facilitated</td>
<td>Marcia VanderMast 764-4352 (evenings or leave message) Sue Brothers 481-0502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationwide</td>
<td>Friends for Survival</td>
<td>Telephone Support</td>
<td>1-800-646-7322 Leave message for call back</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 225-5339, or by email at bmcenany@naminh.org**

### Internet Resources for Survivors

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

### Emergency Numbers

For all urgent situations, call 911 or go to your local emergency room

**New Hampshire Hotlines:**

- The Samaritans, Inc. 24-hour Hotlines: 603-357-5505, 603-924-7000, 1-877-583-8336 (NH toll-free 24-hour hotline)
- Headrest Teenline: 1-800-639-6095 (24-hour line)

**National Hotlines:**

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Friends for Survival: 1-800-646-7322 (9 am-7pm PST, Noon-10 pm EST)
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 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 by email at bmcenany@naminh.org.

Upcoming Survivor Events

**West Central to Host Second Annual Firepower**
On Saturday and Sunday, August 23 and 24, West Central Behavioral Health will host its 6th annual Paddlepower—a fundraising, awareness-raising event designed to help prevent the tragedy of suicide. This year’s event will also feature the second annual Firepower, a 30-hour quiet memorial and tribute to those who have died by suicide. The Lifekeeper Quilt will be displayed at Firepower again this year. For complete details, please visit the Paddlepower website at http://www.paddlepower.org.

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Hosts NH Out of the Darkness Walks**
AFSP will host an Out of the Darkness Walk for suicide prevention in Portsmouth on Saturday, September 27 at 10:00 am. The walk begins at Pierce Island and will cover 2.5 miles. A second Out of the Darkness walk will be held in Hanover, hosted by Dartmouth College, on Sunday, November 2. All proceeds will benefit AFSP’s suicide prevention efforts. Complete details and registration information are available online at www.outofthedarkness.org.

**NAMI Survivor Team Raises Awareness and Funds for NH Suicide Prevention and Mental Illness Efforts**
Join us as we walk together again this year to raise awareness and funding. Please go to www.nami.org/namiwalks08/NH/BeckyMcEnany and join our Survivor walk team (SOS Team), or to contribute. Everyone is welcome! The walk takes place on Sunday, October 5 on the grounds of New Hampshire Hospital in Concord. Check-in begins at 9:30 am.

**2008 Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly (YSPA) Conference Planning Underway**
Save the date! The YSPA Annual Conference will return to the Waterville Valley Conference Center on Friday, November 14. YSPA’s Education Committee has been diligently planning some great workshops, two of which will focus on survivors.

National Survivors of Suicide Day AFSP Teleconference
Saturday, November 22 marks the 10th annual AFSP Survivors of Suicide Teleconference. With generous financial assistance from both the Hanover and Seacoast AFSP Out of the Darkness Walks, New Hampshire will be home to seven teleconference sites, which will be announced as the date draws closer. This is a time for anyone affected by suicide to gather for support, to watch the national teleconference with others who understand, and to share as much or as little as desired. To register, or for more information, please contact Becky McEnany at 225-5359, or by email at bmcenany@naminh.org. You may also watch the webcast online from your home computer; register by going to www.afsp.org.

2008 NH SOS Community Calendar
Please see articles for complete details

- 8/23: Paddlepower, Connecticut River
- 8/24: Firepower, Hanover
- 9/03: Greater Nashua Area GSOS first meeting, Merrimack
- 9/27: AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk, Portsmouth
- 10/5: NAMI NH Walk, Concord
- 11/2: AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk, Hanover
- 11/14: YSPA Conference, Waterville Valley
- 11/22: AFSP National Survivors of Suicide Day Teleconference, statewide

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

AFSP Launches Survivor Outreach Program in NH
Last year, NH residents Marie and Wayne Gagnon, were among the first group of survivors to be trained by AFSP to provide outreach to newly bereaved survivors. This past March, eight additional NH survivors took part in the training and will join the Gagnons in expanding AFSP’s capacity in NH to provide peer support to newly bereaved survivors. AFSP’s Survivor Outreach Program is designed to help those who have recently lost a loved one to suicide by connecting them to local survivors who can provide shared understanding and support. A new survivor can access the program by contacting AFSP at 1-800-979-AFSP.

Catherine Greenleaf to Produce CD to Promote Healing
NH resident Catherine Greenleaf, author of Healing the Hurt Spirit-Daily Affirmations for People who have Lost a Loved One to Suicide, is producing a CD of meditations and music. For details, please visit Catherine’s website at http://www.healingthehurtspirit.com.

NH Funeral Directors Provided Resources for Suicide Survivors
Funeral directors are in a unique position to be able to reach out to survivors early in their grief and help connect them to support. Following a suggestion made at a Frameworks Training for Funeral Directors at their Annual Meeting, resource folders for family members who have lost a loved one to suicide have now been provided to all funeral directors in NH. The folders contain information on grief, how to help children grieve, financial planning, survivor outreach, support groups, bibliography and a free copy of the CD Before Their Time. Contents of the survivor packet may be downloaded at the NAMI NH website at www.naminh.org. Click on “Suicide Prevention,” and then click on “Survivors.”

Greater Nashua Area Grieving Survivors of Suicide Support Group to Host First Meeting in September
Over the past several years, three NH survivors (Diane Bunnell, Marcia VanderMast, and Sue Brothers) have completed the Support Group Facilitator Training offered through AFSP, and have started survivor support groups in their own communities. Maureen Sloan and Diane McEntee have completed the training and will join Marie Gagnon in starting a new Survivor Support Group in Nashua in Fall 2008. For more information about this group, please call 603-320-0472. All of the NH survivors completing the 2008 trainings were generously supported by funds raised by the Seacoast Chapter of AFSP at its fall Out of the Darkness Walk.

New Website for Survivors in NH
Members of the Hampstead Survivor of Suicide support group have launched a new website. The site was developed by Heather Wells, a Stonehill College student and the daughter of Dr. Roger Wells, a member of the NH House of Representatives. Roger co-leads the group with his son Dan and they meet every Friday from 4-5pm at the Hampstead library. Roger and Dan have led the support group for over 15 years, making it one of NH’s longest running groups. They have also been involved in leadership roles with the AFSP. For more information or to view the website go to: http://nhcopingwithsuicide.com.

Community Health and Healing (CHH) Funds Available
The Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly (YSPA) and NAMI NH’s Frameworks/Garrett Lee Smith project oversee the Community Health and Healing (CHH) Fund to provide supports to survivors and communities following a suicide death. Requests for funds are typically responded to within 48-72 hours. To find out more about the fund or to get an application go to the following link: http://naminh.org/documents/chhform.pdf.

New Monthly Survivor Committee Conference Calls
For the past several months, interested survivors have been meeting by conference call to discuss and offer help on survivor-related advocacy and support efforts around the state. This is a great opportunity to connect with other NH survivors about activities, find out what is happening, volunteer to help, and request help on starting something for survivors in your own community. If you would like to join the call, sign up for the survivor email list and you will be notified of the times, or contact Beck at bmcenany@naminh.org.

The following resources are available on loan through the Family Resource Connection at NH State Library:

Men Get Depression

What a Difference a Friend Makes
PSAs for television, radio, and print for the Mental Health National Anti-Stigma campaign. (2007-2008)

The Truth about Suicide
AFSP has developed the 27-minute film The Truth about Suicide: Real Stories of Depression in College as an outgrowth of its commitment to support colleges and universities in implementing suicide prevention as an integral part of its ongoing campus activities and services.

A Fierce Goodbye
Hosted by folksinger Judy Collins, the DVD features family survivors of suicide who share personal stories of their trauma.

A Life Saved
This 10-minute video tells the true story of a suicide intervention performed by three boys who had just completed a suicide prevention unit called "Lifelines - A School-Based Response to Youth Suicide."

There Ought to be a Law
Cathy Crowley worked two full-time jobs and devoted all of her free time to her family before her teenage son Larry’s death by suicide. There Ought to Be A Law shows Cathy’s

See Resources, page 6
Survivor Contributions

A Mother’s Day Story

Mother’s and Father’s Days following child loss can become dreaded events. Stores and are filled with flowers, candies, balloons, and colorful decorations to serve as reminders of the coming holiday event. But when you have lost a child, a day that used to bring joy can bring pain, confusion, and awkwardness...Why do I not feel included in this day? Am I not still a mother or a father even if I have lost my child to an early death? Of course! A survivor shares her powerful story of this year’s Mother’s Day:

I received a floral delivery e-greeting from my sister, Nancy, today. The last time I recall having a Mother’s Day greeting from her was the year Joanna died. I was so touched by it that I sent it around to all the mothers in my address book. Sunday when I went to church, I greeted my good friend with, “Happy Mother’s Day.” She said, “Thank you,” but didn’t return it to me. It occurred to me that she didn’t know what to say to me, because of Joanna’s death - just as my sister might have been afraid to send me a greeting for fear of hurting me.

At the time in our service when we light candles of joy and concern, I lit a candle and told the story of my sister’s last Mother’s Day greeting from her was the year Joanna died. I was so touched by it that I sent it around to all the mothers in my address book. Sunday when I went to church, I greeted my good friend with, “Happy Mother’s Day.” She said, “Thank you,” but didn’t return it to me. It occurred to me that she didn’t know what to say to me, because of Joanna’s death - just as my sister might have been afraid to send me a greeting for fear of hurting me.

At the time in our service when we light candles of joy and concern, I lit a candle and told the story of my sister’s last Mother’s Day greeting, Joanna’s death by suicide shortly thereafter, and this year’s greeting from my sister, ending with, “Even though my child has died, my experience of being her mother still sustains me, and is a significant part of who I am. So, if any of you feel moved to wish me a Happy Mother’s Day, it’s okay...I would love it.” Well! I lost count of all the good wishes and hugs that I received.

Later in the day my sister, Nancy called and I was able to share with her the significance of her greeting. It was a very healing day.

~Marcia VanderMast, NH Survivor

The Choice

Being alive and truly living Are different things, you see. One is only steady breathing, The other, being all I can be.

Now I have a choice, you know. To be or not to be. Be just alive, or truly live... What is the choice for me?

Tomorrow

My child is gone! My world is black. What do I do To get back on track?

Sadness, regrets, A gaping hole. Where are the good feelings That were in my soul?

I seem to have lost them, They seem to have died. Along with my loved one, Oh, the tears I have cried!

Tears for me? Or tears for him? I cannot distinguish Amidst the clamor and din.

My mind seems so crazy, My heart so forlorn. Memories so real My emotions are torn.

Lean into your pain! The experts do say. Lean into MY PAIN? I don’t want to today!

Lean into my pain. I know that I should. Lean into my pain, I would if I could.

Maybe tomorrow, My soul will be stronger. And the dark gaping hole Will be with me no longer.

But today IS tomorrow! From yesterday’s view. So NOW is the moment To begin and renew.

~Marie Gagnon, NH Survivor

Resources

(continued from page 5)

inspiring transformation from a shy ‘average Mom’ to a savvy activist who takes on one of the most powerful and feared lobbying groups in the country.

AFSP Facilitating Suicide Bereavement Support Groups: A Self-Study Manual and DVD
Based on AFSP’s highly-regarded support group facilitator training program, this self-study package covers the how-to’s of starting and running a survivor support group, and is ideal for both those who are thinking of starting a new group, and for experienced facilitators looking to increase their knowledge and skill.

Real Men Real Depression
An estimated six million men in the United States have a depressive disorder every year. Although these illnesses are highly treatable, many men do not recognize, acknowledge, or seek help for their depression. These are PSAs for television, radio, and print about Men and Depression, produced by NIMH.

AFSP Teleconference 2007
DVD of the 9th Annual AFSP National Survivors of Suicide Teleconference.

To borrow these resources, or other materials related to survivors and suicide prevention, please contact the Family Resource Center (FRC) at the NH State Library at 1-800-298-4321, or by email at FRC@library.state.nh.us.

~Marcia VanderMast, NH Survivor

~Marie Gagnon, NH Survivor