The Survivor of Suicide Loss Sub-Committee of the Suicide Prevention Council is Born

In August of 2013, Susan Morrison and Debbie Baird attended their first Suicide Prevention meeting as the representatives of Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL), replacing Marsha Chapple. Susan and Debbie were welcomed on the council and recognized for the “Loss Survivor” perspective they provide.

In the fall of 2013, Susan and Debbie took many road trips around the state of New Hampshire to Loss Survivor Support Group meetings, the Suicide Prevention Conference and the NAMIWalks NH where they talked to Survivors of Suicide Loss. In doing this, they were able to gather feedback to strengthen the voice of what Loss Survivors need in NH. As a result of their research Susan and Debbie found common threads of what is needed to lend more support for Survivors of Suicide Loss in New Hampshire. (Cont’d on Page 6)

Seeing the World from a Beautiful Perspective

I lost my husband to suicide in January 2013. It is a day that time stood still. I now realize after almost 18 months have passed, suicide never leaves you as a survivor. I do not have the guilt I once did, that I am much more forgiving and I understand a little more about why my husband did this. No note was left, but I do have a wonderful support team that helps me to better cope with my loss. I also learned to accept that suicide is like a ripple effect. Imagine looking at a quiet lake so still and calm - then a fish pops his head up and a ripple emerges; the ripple expands more and more. You never know when the calm will disappear due to an event or memory that prompts that ripple effect again. I realized I needed an outlet, so I decided to learn to oil paint in his memory. I take one day a week to learn the beauty of seeing the world from a beautiful perspective. This is Mt. Sunapee, our favorite place to ski. It holds many wonderful memories and it gives me a little bit of peace….

Karen
Mother and Son Coming Together to Help Raise Awareness for Suicide Prevention
by Parker & Allison Sharpe

Allison Sharpe, an SOSL and a Loss Survivor Speaker created the beautiful “Wear Your Heart on Your Sleeve” t-shirts to help raise awareness for suicide prevention. Allison shares, “Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”

My son was only 9 years old when his uncle took his life, but as parents we have been open with our kids about his death, our grief and how this tremendous loss impacts us. Being proactive has been a blessing in our journey through grief, and we take some comfort knowing we can change the way someone thinks about suicide.

I couldn’t be more proud of my son, Parker. Although it is a difficult subject to talk about, he has chosen to raise awareness for suicide prevention by creating a new design for our “Wear Your Heart on Your Sleeve” t-shirt. I love the new design and it has been added to our collection with the original. It is our hope the t-shirts will encourage conversation and decrease the STIGMA for Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness. 10% of the proceeds of these shirts are donated to NAMI NH.

Parker states, “As part of my project for my Bar Mitzvah, I created a new t-shirt for “Wear Your Heart on Your Sleeve” for Suicide Prevention Awareness. I loved the original my Mom designed, but wanted one that was unisex, because the original is for girls.”

“I am also the team captain for this year’s Out of the Darkness Walk and have been leading our fundraising efforts. I lost my Uncle to suicide 3 years ago - and I miss him. We fund raiser every year to raise awareness for suicide prevention to bring the topic out of the darkness. This event impacted my family greatly and made us realize what a big issue suicide is.”

If you would like to buy one, all shirts are $20. Please contact Allison at www.wearyourheartonyourselee14@gmail.com.

Mother and Daughter Stepping it Up for Suicide Awareness!
by Kelly & Deviroux D’Errico

On June 28th and 29th Kelly & Deviroux D’Errico participated in the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s (AFSP) “Out of the Darkness” Overnight and walked from sunset to sunrise for 16.4 miles to raise funds and awareness for Suicide Prevention.

This is Kelly’s 5th walk and Deviroux’s 3rd. Kelly lost her son Kory on October 21, 2009, just days before his 26th birthday. Deviroux lost her brother & only sibling. Every year, since Kory’s death, they have participated in the annual Out of the Darkness Overnight Walk raising funds in Kory’s name. “This is our therapy, our healing time, our voice for my son. The people and friends we have met along the way, listening to their stories and sharing ours, are friendships of a lifetime.”

Proceeds from the Out of the Darkness Overnight support research and a variety of prevention, education and advocacy programs including distribution of the Foundation’s More Than Sad educational program on teen depression and suicide prevention to high schools across the country.
Butterflies to Remember by Brian and Janice Burris

A fund was created in our daughter Jillian’s name at Concord Hospital for the reason that Jillian worked there and died there. The fund is to assist Concord Hospital employees with financial aid in times of need. There are many great causes at Concord Hospital but this is one we think Jillian would have most wanted to be a part of. The photo is of a plaque in her memory, just outside the emergency room entrance at the hospital. The plaque sits in a butterfly friendly garden for the butterfly to us symbolizes Jillian’s life past and always.

Remembering Our Loved Ones by Jennifer Klember & Debbie Baird

In January 2009 we lost our brother and son, Matt Hampton, to suicide and to honor him and all other loved ones lost to any cause we organized this event to continue in the efforts of Suicide Prevention and Awareness. September 7, 2014 (Suicide Prevention Week), the 4th Annual Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony was held. The Memory Tree sat on the lawn of the NAMI NH office at 85 North State Street in Concord. It remained lit and in place for one week to honor all loved ones we have lost to suicide or to any cause. All proceeds will go to NAMI NH, so they may continue to provide support and education to those affected by mental illness and suicide in the communities across the state of NH.

Please contact Jenn Klember at jennklember@gmail.com or Debbie Baird at dbaird@naminh.org to participate next year and/or for more information.

Every Fall, people who are passionate about mental illness and suicide prevention walk to raise awareness and funds at the annual American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s Community Walk in Portsmouth and NAMIWalks NH in Concord. Both walks are wonderful opportunities to connect with other survivors and raise awareness. Monies raised at the AFSP Walk go primarily to fund national suicide prevention efforts and funds raised at the NAMIWalks go to support NH efforts around mental illness, suicide prevention and survivor supports. All are welcome whether or not they choose to raise money.

At NAMIWalks NH, loss survivors are welcome to join Team SOS or start their own team to walk in memory of a loved one. 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:

- 100 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 in 2013 and 2014
- Hotel accommodations for SurvivorVoices attendees traveling from a distance
- Educational DVDs for use in NH High Schools

In addition to the Team SOS funds and their efforts, also available are the Community Health and Healing Funds provided by the NH Bureau of Behavioral Health and SAMSHA’S Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant that support the annual Survivor of Suicide Loss Newsletter, the NH Survivors of Suicide Speakers’ Bureau, and the Annual AFSP International Survivor of Suicide Loss Day. Any additional monies can be applied for by NH individuals and communities for financial support of other activities and events that provide support to survivors or communication following a suicide event or suicidal behavior. For more information, contact Elaine de Mello at edemello@naminh.org.
I Will Be

If you think of me as gone forever,
I will be.

If you think of me as sadness and tears,
I will be.

If you think of me as your broken heart,
I will be.

That’s not what I want to be,
but I will be.

If you think of me as memories to cherish,
I will be.

If you think of me as laughter and joy,
I will be.

If you think of me as your healing heart,
I will be.

That’s what I want to be,
please let me be.

by Rob Anderson

Representing Connor by Reed Allen

Instead of walking directly from my French classroom to the parking lot where my friends are celebrating the end of testing, I duck into my Mom’s car. Having been too busy studying for mid-terms to write it ahead of time, I begin to prepare a testimony on a much more important form of education. I ask myself, how can I best convince someone that suicide prevention education must be required in all schools? I start simple. “In 2011 I lost one of my closest friends, Connor Ball, to suicide. We were only freshmen in high school.”

My pen continues to scrawl notes down the page as my mind spits out ideas in a blur of emotion. I wonder about thoughts of how others see Connor through me. I remember sitting around a fire pit, full of burning logs dispersing the lingering scent of smoke, on the first anniversary of Connor’s death. I told my friends and family how appreciative I am of the short, but memorable time I had with him. The constant jokes that I rarely understood, and lengthy conversations about the Red Sox, did a lot more than add filler to my daily life. From a few inches below where he would fall, I stand up for him. If his smile can no longer beam on his laughing face, his spirit can at least shine through me. I represent him well, working to help those who suffer silently in the same way he did, and prevent others from being forced to overcome the same emotional pain I have encountered.

My Mom and I walk into a large building, squatting on wide stone steps next to the State House. In room 204, I write my name on a small yellow note pad covered in shaky handwriting, and find a seat next to my friend, Dan. We face a rectangle of tables lined with representatives. Dan and I shake hands and sit quietly, looking down at the papers vibrating off of our nervous bodies and waiting until the start of the public hearing.

The first speaker walks to the head of the rectangle. Pressing my body into the thin cushions of my chair, I listen to mothers and fathers of suicide victims, doctors with statistics on suicide, and professionals who research mental illness and how to treat it. Eventually, Dan is called. Teardrops begin to squeeze out from between my eyelids and wet my cheeks as he talks about hiking Flag Mountain twice with Connor and me. The first time, we watched the sun rise. The second time, we spread his ashes.

Next, my name is called. I stand up, pull my body across the carpet with my heavy shoes, and sit in front of the representatives. I tell them, “Before Connor died I didn’t know suicide really happened. I didn’t know it traveled past the movie screen and the pages of books. I didn’t know one of my best friends could be at risk for suicide. Had I known everything I know today about suicide, perhaps I could have saved Connor. Perhaps I could have prevented a tragedy that has created a long lasting effect not just on me, but within and beyond my community.” I stand up and return to my seat after not receiving any questions. My head remains focused on the green carpet below my feet, so I don’t know how the representatives or the other speakers react, but I hope they can imagine how much of an amazing person Connor was. When the final speaker also returns to her seat, the committee chair ends the hearing. Expecting to quickly slip out with my Mom, I rise and begin walking, but before I can squeeze through the door, I am presented with a confirming handshake from every adult in the room.
**The Makayla Fund by Kellie Guerriero**

In memory of our daughter Makayla who took her life on November 15, 2012, we have started a 501(c)3 organization “The Makayla Fund”, which provides high school sports scholarships to girls and boys who participate in a high school sport. We also are working to provide Suicide Awareness and Prevention programs in school. Since December 2013 we have provided over 30 high school students and teams with scholarships. We will be holding our 2nd annual Makayla Open and Gala on 9/20/14 at Ridder Country Club in Whitman, MA - last year we raised over $30,000.

**Friends of Noah Continue to Reach to His Family**

My son Noah died by suicide five years ago and ever since his memorial service all of his friends have reached out to our family and have helped us with our wood for the winter, a job that was always my son’s. I appreciate their help always and to be a part of their conversations, memories and humor…it makes for wonderful times. When I hear adults complain about young people, I tell them the story of five young men who have remained Noah’s friends.

**Blood Drive Helps 600 People In Need! by Ron Hart**

ALL “3” NH SOSL QUILTS AT THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BLOOD DRIVE

The Compassionate Friends of Manchester and Nashua hosted a blood drive June 7th in Manchester to honor their children, siblings and grandchildren by giving the gift of life in their memory. Survivor of Suicide Loss and Compassionate Friend member, Ron Hart, set up our SOSL quilts along with NAMI NH (National Alliance of Mental Illness) and AFSP (American Foundation of Suicide Prevention) information at the table. He said “This is an extra special honor and pleasure to show our “3” SOSL Life Keeper quilts to the people of New Hampshire. Here people are donating their time and blood to save lives and here we are trying to raise awareness to prevent losing lives.” 199 pints of blood were collected and they were able to help 600 people in need - BIG KUDOS TO EVERYONE!! What a wonderful gift in memory of our children, siblings, and grandchildren – the precious gift of life – their love lives on.
New Member of the NAMI NH Team

NAMI NH is very pleased to welcome Debbie Baird as one of our new staff members. Debbie has been working with NAMI NH since April and prior to that has been very active as a volunteer in many activities including the loss survivor support groups, NAMIWalks NH, International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day Teleconferences, and the NH Suicide Prevention Council (SPC). Debbie will be working with the suicide prevention and postvention programs, offering training and assistance to communities in planning and implementing best practices. Debbie will also be the primary contact for loss survivors in providing outreach and support, as well as technical assistance to the loss survivor network. She brings lived experience and great passion and energy to her new role.

Sharing the Story of Suicide Loss

SurvivorsVoices Speakers’ Bureau is a National Best Practice program that teaches those bereaved by suicide how to speak safely and effectively about their loss. Survivors of suicide loss are key partners with suicide prevention and postvention. No one is more passionate about preventing further suicides and letting other survivors know they are not alone.

Two Loss Survivors attend a Facilitator Suicide Bereavement Support Group Training in Chicago in April

With Community Health and Healing Funds available to any NH resident for activities to promote healing or awareness around suicide, Susan Morrison and Debbie Baird were able to attend. It is their goal, working with the SOSL Sub-Committee & its members for the State Suicide Prevention Council to help build loss survivor support group capacity for the state of NH.

From the information gathered it was clear that a Survivors of Suicide Loss Sub-Committee (SOSL) was required. Susan and Debbie compiled all the ideas and set their first meeting for January 2014. They shared the list with everyone interested in being part of the Survivor of Suicide Loss Sub-Committee (SOSL).

Here are some of the top priorities that came from the meeting.

Support Groups:

- Help to build capacity for more Loss Survivor Support Groups to meet more than once a month and/or possibly weekly - on different days and times around the state.
- Support facilitators and co-facilitators of the existing groups with training opportunities and provide initial training and mentoring for new facilitators and all those interested in starting a new Loss Survivor Support Group.

Survivors:

- Lend support to newly trained survivor speakers and initiate a mentoring program for them.
- Encourage Loss Survivors to attend the International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (ISOS) Teleconference held by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). To provide additional support in coordination and the planning process for NH Teleconference hosted sites. NAMIWalks NH - Team SOS.
- Inspire the creation of NAMIWalks NH sub-teams within "Team SOS".
- Increase involvement on the Suicide Prevention Conference Planning Committee - provide SOSL workshop ideas, guidance with SOSL scholarships, etc.

SUSAN AND DEBBIE ARE EXCITED THE SOSL SUB-COMMITTEE HAS EVOLVED and continually invite new members to join. The sub-committee meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 4-6 PM at the NAMI NH office in Concord. If you would like to join the meeting, but can’t be there in person a conference call line is also available. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Susan or Debbie at sosl4nhspc@gmail.com and/or call Debbie Baird at (603) 225-5359.

Susan Morrison & Debbie Baird.
Survivor of Suicide Loss Calendar 2014/2015

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.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2014: (Annually)
Compassionate Friends Annual Garden Social/
Walk to Remember, Manchester
This is a special day where members join together with family and friends in our beautiful Children’s Butterfly Garden to celebrate and remember all of our children, siblings and grandchildren. The day begins with a ‘Walk to Remember’, followed by a cookout and the unveiling of the new bricks added to our garden’s walkway, and ending with the magical butterfly release. www.tcfmanchester.org.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2014:
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Out of the Darkness Walk,
Pierce Island, Portsmouth
Join the Out of the Darkness Walk to raise money for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Funds raised at this walk primarily support national efforts to understand and prevent suicide through research, education and advocacy. Call (603) 862-4343 or e-mail ken.lavalley@unh.edu.

OCTOBER 4-10, 2014:
Mental Illness Awareness Week, Statewide
In 1990, Congress established the first week of October as Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) in recognition of NAMI’s efforts to raise mental illness awareness. Please go to www.naminh.org for more information about events around NH.

OCTOBER 5, 2014: (Annually)
NAMIWalks 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 loss survivor outreach and support. Meet other NH loss survivors, join Team SOS or form your own team. All are welcome. For more information or to register, call (603) 225-5359 or visit www.naminh.org.

NOVEMBER 7, 2014:
NH Suicide Prevention Conference
The 11th Annual NH Suicide Prevention Conference will offer a variety of workshops and plenary sessions for anyone interested in suicide prevention. Survivors of suicide loss are encouraged to attend but should keep in mind that the day can be very difficult for Loss Survivors with recent losses. SOSL scholarships are available. For more information, www.naminh.org or dbaird@naminh.org.

NOVEMBER 22, 2014:
International Survivors of Suicide Day
AFSP Annual Teleconference
The Saturday before Thanksgiving will mark the 16th annual AFSP Survivors of Suicide Loss International Teleconference. To organize a site, attend, or watch the webcast online from your home computer go to www.afsp.org.

DECEMBER 13, 2014:
Worldwide CandleLighting, Compassionate Friends,

AUGUST, 2015:
12th Annual Paddle Power, Lebanon
Support the West Central Behavioral Health Center in Lebanon by joining this river adventure fundraiser. You’ll paddle your way down 25 miles of the Connecticut River to draw awareness to the tragedy of suicide. Proceeds from Paddlepower support the 24/7 emergency crisis intervention services offered to the community by the mental health center. To participate in Paddlepower, call (603) 448-0126.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2015:
5th Annual Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony, Concord
In recognition of mental illness awareness, a tree lighting ceremony was established by survivors of suicide loss and will take place on September 6th to help kick off World Suicide Prevention Week in NH. The tree will stay lit for one week in remembrance of people lost to suicide or any cause of death. Bulbs may be purchased in honor of your loved ones to raise funds for the National Alliance on Mental Illness NH. For more information, contact dbaird@naminh.org.

SEPTEMBER 6-12, 2015:
41st Annual National Suicide Prevention Week.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2015:
5th Annual Ride for Nathan, Derry
Please help spread the message that mental illness is a chronic disease that responds to treatment. Let’s ride together to help prevent suicide! Proceeds from this motorcycle ride are being donated to NAMI NH. Contact Michael Folley at mfolley@comcast.net.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2015:
Rail Trail Ramble, Lebanon
Join and support NH’s Crisis/Suicide Hotline by joining the walk/hike ride on Labor Day to raise funds for Headrest, Inc. Headrest, Inc. answers the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline calls for NH (800-273-TALK), 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 ed.rajsteter@headrest.org.

For more calendar events throughout the year, please go to www.naminh.org.
RESOURCES FOR NH SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS

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 - sethschool@comcast.net or call (603)887-4302

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

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

National Alliance on Mental Illness - NH - Provides outreach and support to NH loss survivor network. www.naminh.org or 1-800-242-6264

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

MUSIC

The following CDs were produced by survivors for survivors:

Before Their Time - www.beforetheirtime.org (800) 447-3803

Chaos of the Heart - www.musicforthesoul.org or (877)298-9081

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 LOSS

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

National Alliance on Mental Illness NH (NAMINH) - www.naminh.org

American Foundation for the Prevention of Suicide (AFSP) - www.afsp.org

American Association of Suicidology (AAS) - www.suicidology.org

GriefNet (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@amaritansnh.org

NEW HAMPSHIRE HOTLINES

Teen Hotline: (877)583-TEEN

Headrest Teeline: (800)639-6095

NATIONAL HOTLINES

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal call (800)273-TALK or 911

National Suicide Prevention Crisis Hotline (National) - Call (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