

NEW HAMPSHIRE SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS REPORT



We acknowledge that the difficulties of this past year have had deep impact on those affected by mental illness and suicide. Isolation and reduced access to support and services have influenced healing and recovery. Throughout this past year NAMI NH has continued to provide services, education and support virtually. We are grateful to the many individuals who stepped up quickly to ensure that vital programs and services remain. These services and support groups can be found on the NAMI NH website: www.NAMINH.org.

Facilitators of Survivors of Suicide Loss Groups Pivot to Virtual and Carry On

WRITTEN BY ELAINE DE MELLO

The dedication of group facilitators to support those in need was evident when COVID-19 resulted in physical distancing. Many groups converted to virtual Zoom meetings and were up and running early in the year.

Although the technology had its barriers and does not replace in person contact, it did allow for attendance from some participants who would not have been able to attend a meeting physically. Support group facilitators are to be commended for adapting quickly to support those in need. NAMI NH can provide tech support and Zoom access for group facilitators to assist in continuing these groups.

Please contact Elaine de Mello (edemello@NAMINH.org) or Liz Hodgkins (lhodgkins@NAMINH.org) for technical assistance with virtual support groups. A listing of support groups for Survivors of Suicide Loss can be found [here](#) (please note, this is subject to change-please check with group facilitators for more information).

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NAMIWalks NH: October 10, 2020

WRITTEN BY JB BRACKETT

On October 10, 2020, World Mental Health Day, over a thousand Granite Staters came together to participate in NAMIWalks NH Your Way. A record breaking 145 teams and 1,288 participants united across social media, sharing photos, telling their stories, raising awareness, and inspiring hope. Thanks to these amazing participants as well as the support of generous sponsors, a record breaking \$183,418.22 was raised, helping to further NAMI NH's mission of providing education, support and advocacy to all affected by mental illness and suicide in the Granite State.



NAMI NH continues to be humbled by the overwhelming support of NAMIWalks NH Your Way – whether in person or virtually. Now in its 19th year, NAMIWalks NH is a beloved and highly anticipated event. Typically held in Concord, this 5k walk unites people from across the state in the common goal of stomping out the stigma surrounding mental illness, as well as raising valuable funds for NAMI NH. Though nothing could ever take the place of over 2,000 Granite Staters walking together for the common cause of Mental Health for All, the health and safety of walkers, volunteers, staff, and the community was the top priority in 2020 and we are grateful to the many dedicated participants who embraced the concept of a virtual walk and made it a success.

Though disappointed, participants of NAMIWalks NH Your Way rose to the occasion. Some formed teams and walked in small groups, all while following the current health guidelines. Others ran on the treadmill, kayaked, practiced yoga, baked, and hula hooped. No matter what activity they chose, they were united in their dedication to crushing stigma and raising awareness.

It is well understood that the challenges of COVID-19 have been felt by all, and many have had to adapt to new ways of life and solitude. In light of this, however, there are some positives that have come of the situation. Due to the physical distancing guidelines and being unable to hold the walk in person, NAMIWalks NH was more accessible to all people across the state.

NAMIWalks NH returns October 2021. Stay tuned for more details or reach out to bporter@NAMINH.org for more information..

“If we focus on family, friends and love, we can get through these times together.”



Pedaling for Prevention

WRITTEN BY DEBBIE BAIRD

Pedaling for Prevention was founded in 2019 by Mike Mariani and Devin McLaughlin; two strong and courageous young men who have huge hearts and a passion for suicide prevention. In 2018, Mike and Devin lost their brother and friend Nathan Mariani to suicide. Not long after, they decided they wanted to help raise awareness for mental illness and suicide prevention and let their friends, peers, classmates, and family members know that it is okay to talk, and help is available.

In a few months, they planned a 3762-mile cross-country bike trip from VA to CA for the summer of 2020. Then the COVID pandemic hit and they had to regroup.

They revised their bicycle trip to 700 miles within New England, and with a chase vehicle and family, they went from New Hampshire, to Vermont, to Maine, and back to New Hampshire. Stopping along the way and through social distancing and wearing masks, they handed out resources and told their story of Nathan and how to get help and that it is okay to ask for help.

Mike and Devin were recently awarded the 2020 Kathleen Sherman Memorial Award at the 17th Annual NH Suicide Prevention Conference. They both plan to take this 3,762-mile cross-country bicycle trip when it is safe to do so. They are remarkable young men as demonstrated through their patience, perseverance, and efforts to share that we need to keep talking about suicide prevention and mental illness.

NH SUICIDE PREVENTION CONFERENCE ELAINE DE MELLO

NH's 17th Annual Suicide Prevention Conference, like other events, went virtual for the first time. Approximately 375 people attended the conference, titled "Hope, Heart and Healing," which took place on November 12 & 13, 2020. The conference held a variety of workshops featuring a cross section of topics: mental health, lived experience, and impact of suicide and strategies for healing; peer support for first responders; cultural influences in prevention; the impact of loneliness across the lifespans, and a conceptual and experiential journey through mindfulness.

Closing events included the presentation of the Kathleen Sherman Award to two young men who embarked on a long distance bicycle journey to raise funds and awareness for suicide prevention. A closing video, titled "Voices of Hope in the 603," was a collage of young people in NH sharing their messages of reflection on 2020 and messages of hope.

This inspirational video can be found [here](#). Some of their quotes have been captured in this newsletter.

The Concept Project Walks for Mental Health

WRITTEN BY JB BRACKETT

College students and childhood friends Garret Roberts, Adrian Delli Colli, and Emmie Daswani are the minds behind The Concept Project, an initiative to raise awareness about various social issues. Through a series of events that bring attention to current issues while raising funds for organizations that address those issues, this trio of compassionate, dedicated, and fearless friends are poised to make a difference.

In December 2020, Roberts, Delli Colli, and Daswani decided that their cause should be mental health. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, they noticed the mental health struggles they faced in their own day-to-day lives and saw their friends and family facing similar challenges. The group decided it was the perfect time to raise awareness of mental health and chose NAMI New Hampshire as the beneficiary of their efforts.

The three began their symbolic walk for mental health near the top of Mt. Washington and ended on Hampton Beach. The trio said that this path was intentional, to symbolize the highs and lows of mental health, particularly during the past year. Beginning their 120 mile journey during the first nor'easter of the season, they set off in the challenging conditions that a New Hampshire winter often brings and ended on a sunny but brisk day at Hampton Beach to cheers from masked and physically distanced friends and family. Throughout the walk, which averaged over 20 miles a day and spanned 6 days, the friends relied on the kindness of strangers and communities for a warm place to sleep and a hot meal.

With the support of many generous donors in New Hampshire and beyond, the trio raised over \$9,500 for NAMI New Hampshire - and in the process brought mental health awareness to light. NAMI New Hampshire was humbled and honored to be the beneficiary of this project, and we are certain we haven't heard the last from this phenomenal group of young adults. They inspire us and give us hope!



Suicide Prevention Efforts Across New Hampshire

WRITTEN BY ELAINE DE MELLO

This past year, there have been many initiatives that have moved NH's suicide prevention efforts in several systems across the state. Some of these include the following: SB 282 was implemented and became RSA 193-J, requiring schools in NH to have crisis plans and 2 hours of suicide prevention training for all staff, students and volunteers associated with each district. Mobile Crisis Teams in three of the mental health regions are slated for expansion statewide, to include Mobile Crisis Teams designed to respond to children in crisis. These teams are essential components of mental health emergency response in reducing risk of suicide, and helping to stabilize mental health crises without use of inpatient or more intensive emergency services.

With increased attention to the need to support our first responders and law enforcement community, mental health and suicide prevention training at the Police Academy has been extended to correctional officers. Crisis Intervention Team training has taken place across the state for first responders, police departments and state troopers; and specialized mental health training has been provided to departments in addressing their own mental health issues in the aftermath of suicides of members of their own department.

Like many other organizations, NAMI NH pivoted programs and services to a virtual mode to continue to make training and support available to individuals, families and communities. The pandemic did not prevent people from benefitting from these virtual programs. For example, the total number of participants trained in suicide prevention and mental health virtually in NH through NAMI NH from March projected through end of year was approximately 9,000.

Across all support groups (family, peer and loss survivors) there was participation by 1,226 individuals from March 2020 through October 2020. Support group facilitators were committed to continue offering virtual groups to support individuals and families affected by mental illness and suicide.

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day: November 17, 2020

WRITTEN BY SHAMERA SIMPSON

Each November, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) supports hundreds of International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (ISOSL) events around the world. At these events, survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope.

For many, this event is the first step in gaining comfort in their loss. This free event offers an opportunity for loss survivors, no matter where they are in their healing journey, to connect and find support with others in their community.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the AFSP New Hampshire collaborated with partners from Makin' it Happen, NH Healthy Families, the Manchester Veterans Administration, Samaritans NH, and local suicide loss survivors to offer a Virtual statewide program on November 21, 2020.

Each registered participant received a packet of resources and support materials by mail. The program included an In Memoria slideshow, an AFSP produced documentary, small breakout groups for conversation, and a candle lighting ceremony that was attended by 46 survivors from around the state.



Upcoming in 2021

State Suicide Prevention Plan:

The NH Suicide Prevention Council (NH SPC) will be looking at the state's suicide prevention plan, which was drafted for 2017-2020. The leaders of the NH Suicide Prevention Council, members of subcommittees and key stakeholders are in the process of updating the plan, guided by Pear Associates. Survivors of Suicide Loss, a subcommittee of the NH SPC co-chaired by Debbie Baird and Shamera Simpson, will have an active role in revising the plan. The current NH State Plan can be found [here](#). For more info on the NH SPC and the state plan, contact SPC co-chairs Mary Forsythe-taber: mft@mih4u.org or Candice Porter: candice.porter@connorsclimb.org.

NAMI NH Strategic Plan:

NAMI NH will be revisiting and updating the strategic plan for the organization, with input from key stakeholders. NAMI NH has been in NH for 40 years serving as a grassroots organization working to improve the quality of life for all by providing support, education and advocacy for people affected by mental illness and suicide. The voices of those with lived experience have always been the essence of NAMI NH's priorities and mission.

NH Nexus Project 2.0:

This 5 federal year suicide prevention grant is managed by NAMI NH and focused on youth through the age of 24. The first year of this grant concluded on January 14, 2021 and resulted in the establishment of a steering committee and implementation teams in three targeted regions: Carroll County, North Country and the Capital Region. It also resulted in hiring two Care Liaisons who will work closely with young people at risk for suicide and their support system.

Connect training and planning sessions were conducted in two of the regions along with a statewide Connect Young Adult Leader Training, an *In Our Own Voice* speakers training and a CALM (Counseling on Access to Lethal Means) training of future trainers. In the next grant year, we look forward to continued suicide prevention and postvention training and planning sessions and building of infrastructure across NH, involving the 3 regions and key stakeholders including youth and young adults around the state.

For more information about this grant project, please contact Kelley Caravona: kcaravona@naminh.org.

**"I just want people to know that
even if you do feel alone, someone
does love and support you."**

NH Suicide Prevention Conference:

The 18th NH Suicide Prevention Conference is tentatively scheduled for November 4, 2021 at the Grappone Center in Concord; however, the conference committee is prepared to be flexible about how and when this conference will be delivered, depending on the circumstances with the pandemic. For more info on the NH Suicide Prevention Conference please contact Elaine de Mello: edemello@NAMINH.org.

NAMI NH Annual Conference:

This free annual event, titled Mental Health for All, will take place from April 15 to April 22, 2021, virtually. The conference will be a virtual learning series geared towards individuals and families impacted by mental illness and suicide, and will involve a variety of workshops taking place over several days. Stay tuned for more information!

SurvivorVoices:

NAMI NH's *SurvivorVoices* Speaker's Bureau will be training loss survivors to share their story and journey of healing through a two-day program. Loss survivors who go through this experience find sharing their story helpful in understanding and expressing their loss and the strength and supports that have helped them in their grief. If you would like more information about this program, please contact Elaine de Mello: edemello@NAMINH.org.


Work Towards Establishment of 988 Crisis Number:

New Hampshire, along with states across the country, will be working to implement a new national number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This shift to a three digit crisis number *988* is expected to increase the ability for individuals in distress to access 24/7 help. The service is anticipated to be operational in 2022.

The individuals at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline centers are trained in de-escalation and suicide prevention. They are able to de-escalate up to 95% of instances of mental health crises without the involvement of first responders.

Implementation of the 988 number is anticipated for 2022.

INFORMATION & RESOURCES



**Survivors of Suicide Loss
Virtual Coffee Chat**

When: The 2nd Friday of Every Month
Time: 9am to 10am
Where: Zoom - tinyurl.com/soslcoffeechat
Contact: Debbie Baird at dbaird0688@gmail.com
Shamera Simpson at ssimpson@afsp.org

Join members of the NH Suicide Prevention Council's Survivors of Suicide Loss Sub-Committee and fellow loss survivors from around the state to enjoy your morning coffee or tea and learn more about survivor resources and support opportunities available in the state as well as upcoming events and program opportunities.

Let us pause, relax and share together!

THE NH SUICIDE PREVENTION ANNUAL REPORTS PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF SUICIDE PREVENTION INITIATIVES FOR EACH CALENDAR YEAR ALONG WITH EXTENSIVE DATA ABOUT SUICIDE INCIDENTS IN NH. THE NH SUICIDE PREVENTION REPORTS FOR EACH YEAR CAN BE FOUND HERE:

[HTTPS://THECONNECTPROGRAM.ORG/ANNUAL-REPORTS](https://theconnectprogram.org/annual-reports)

NH SURVIVOR OF SUICIDE LOSS (SOSL) GROUPS ARE LISTED [HERE](#). PLEASE NOTE THAT MOST GROUPS ARE MEETING VIRTUALLY AND MEETING DATES AND TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. IT IS BEST TO CONTACT THE SOSL GROUP FACILITATOR FOR CURRENT INFORMATION AND ACCESS TO THE GROUP:

[HTTPS://WWW.NAMINH.ORG/FIND-SUPPORT/SURVIVORS-OF-SUICIDE-LOSS/GRIEF-SUPPORT-GROUPS-FOR-SURVIVOR-OF-SUICIDE-LOSS/](https://www.naminh.org/find-support/survivors-of-suicide-loss/grief-support-groups-for-survivor-of-suicide-loss/)

THE HEALING CONVERSATIONS PROGRAM GIVES SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE THEMSELVES LOSS SURVIVORS. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS PROGRAM IN NH, CONTACT THE STATE COORDINATOR, ALLISON SHARPE:
HCCNEWHAMPSHIRE@AFSP.ORG

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUICIDE: NAMI NH INFO & RESOURCE LINE: 1-800-242-6264, PRESS 4.

(PLEASE NOTE, THIS IS NOT A CRISIS LINE). IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP URGENTLY, PLEASE CALL THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE: 1-800-273-8255, TEXT "NAMI" TO THE CRISIS TEXT LINE: 741-741, OR CONTACT YOUR [COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER](#). IN AN EMERGENCY, CONTACT 911.

The New Hampshire Survivors of Suicide Loss (NH SOSL) Network is a coalition of individuals 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. The network is focused on helping those bereaved with the profound grief that suicide leaves in its wake, which those who have not experienced a suicide loss cannot fully understand.

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