

## Delaware County Suicide Prevention & Awareness Task Force

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~NEWSLETTER~

Issue #5/Winter 2010

### **\*\*Special Topics\*\***

**Lots of interesting & Diverse articles inside!!!!**

#### **SAVE THE DATES!!**

Feb 18: General Membership Meeting  
May 1: DCSPATF Walk/Run

See our Events page for more info!

*To submit future articles to our  
newsletter, please email drafts to  
Terri Erbacher at [terbacher@dciu.org](mailto:terbacher@dciu.org).*

*Submissions for our **Spring**  
newsletter are due by April 1<sup>st</sup>.*

**\*\*Suicide rates are on the rise in Delaware County. In a typical year, we lose 60-65  
community members to suicide. In 2007, we saw a shocking rise to 89 suicides....**

**Let's Talk About It!!**

Who we are: The Delaware County Suicide Prevention and Awareness Task Force (DCSPATF) was begun in 2002 by volunteers who care and who want to increase suicide awareness, decrease stigma and decrease suicide risk in the community. Our mission is to promote understanding that suicide is a preventable community-health problem in our county and to work together toward viable solutions.

Our Newsletter: Our newsletter continues to be a success! We are going 'green' and sending this out electronically to save paper! ***Please forward*** this to anyone who may be interested in reading this so that we can all work together to BUILD suicide AWARENESS, DECREASE STIGMA, and PREVENT future SUICIDES!

#### **~Please Note~**

***Our General Membership Meeting has been rescheduled for Thursday, February 18, 2010 from 9-11AM at Springfield Baptist Church (184 N. Norwinden Dr., Springfield, PA 19064). Bob Kilmer, Aston Police Department Chaplain and member of the Law Enforcement Chaplains of Delaware County, will be presenting. If you plan on attending, please RSVP to [nheilmann@wpsd.k12.pa.us](mailto:nheilmann@wpsd.k12.pa.us) or 484-461-9619 x3013.***

**All are welcome!**

# Local news...



## Task Force Walk/Run 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Art with a Message Contest!!

### Suicide Prevention through Communication and Emotional Well-Being

Call for student artists!! All middle and high school students are called to submit original artwork to "Make a Difference." The goal of this contest is to encourage emotional well-being by promoting the concepts of communication,

hope, community and friendship, in an effort to prevent suicide. We invite all educators and professionals to inspire students to create a poster expressing their thoughts and feelings through art. WINNERS will receive awards, public recognition, and winning artwork will be used as a T-Shirt design for Task Force events/publications. Have fun with it! For more information and poster guidelines, email [info@delcosuicideprevention.org](mailto:info@delcosuicideprevention.org) or contact Nikole Heilmann at 484-461-9619 x3013. Submission deadline is **January 29, 2010**. Winners will be notified by February 26, 2010.

## EMT Suicide Postvention Article

Check out the upcoming February 2010 issue of [\(http://www.emsresponder.com/publication/\)](http://www.emsresponder.com/publication/), which includes an article entitled "Life Emergency Responders Can Help Those Left Behind" by Tony Salvatore, a fourth class EMT, a member of DCSPATF and a staffer at Montgomery County Emergency Service (MCES). The article discusses loss postvention measures for EMTs and Paramedics who find themselves on the scene of a suicide when the victim's survivors become the patients. Tony's contacts with individuals bereaved by suicide over the past ten years indicated that the earlier grief support is received, the more bereaved the more likely they are to recover from such a traumatic loss. First responders are often well-positioned to help and Tony's article tells them what they can do. The article is based on Tony's earlier (MCES 2005) publication, *What First Responders Need to Know About Suicide Loss* posted online by the Delaware County Office of Intercommunity Health Coordination (<http://www.co.delaware.pa.us/intercommunity/SuicideBooklet.pdf>).



## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Soldiers at The Beck Institute

*Aaron Beck and Judith Beck*

We are writing to tell you how we are trying to address a very serious problem: military personnel who need effective psychological/psychiatric treatment but who are not receiving it. To address this urgent problem, we have embarked upon a new initiative to offer partial scholarships to our Cognitive Behavior Therapy training programs for mental health professionals who treat soldiers, veterans, and their families ([www.cbtforsoldiers.org](http://www.cbtforsoldiers.org)). It is startling, and quite dismaying, that so few mental health professionals who are treating our soldiers are trained to deliver treatments that research has demonstrated to be efficacious. Instead, they provide traditional psychotherapy or newer forms of psychotherapy, which have little, if any, demonstrated efficacy.

Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) has been demonstrated in hundreds of controlled trials worldwide to be effective for a wide range of problems, including depression, suicide, post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and many more. The non-profit Beck Institute in suburban Philadelphia is recognized as one of the premiere training sites for this kind of psychotherapy. In fact, I (Aaron Beck, M.D.) developed the therapy in the 1960's, and we have trained thousands of military and clinical mental health and health professionals and educators, locally, nationally, and internationally. We have created or improved CBT programs at universities, hospitals, community mental health centers, health systems, and other organizations.

A ground-breaking study that I (Aaron Beck) conducted with Gregory Brown, Ph.D., and other colleagues, published in the August 3, 2005 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, demonstrates the efficacy of CBT. Recent suicide attempters treated with cognitive therapy were 50 percent less likely to try to kill themselves again 18 months after their short-term treatment ended than those who did not receive the therapy. The research was supported by the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Mental Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

The application of cognitive therapy to the needs of our military veterans is clear. The RAND Corporation conducted a study for the military on Predicting the Consequences of PTSD, Depression and Traumatic Brain Injury. One of the study's summary conclusions is that the capacity to provide evidence-based psychotherapies for PTSD and major depression (for example, CBT) would be important in closing the treatment gap. We would like to bring our expertise to mental health professionals who treat soldiers, veterans, and their families. Please contact us at 610-664-3020 or [education@beckinstitute.org](mailto:education@beckinstitute.org) for info.

### Suicide trend among senior citizens seen as disturbing

*By: JO CIAVAGLIA, Bucks County Courier Times*

*October 25, 2009*

Their life spans were impressive - 81, 82, 86 and 87 years old - but old age didn't take their lives. They did. Increasing suicide rates among Bucks County's oldest residents is a troubling but not surprising trend, local senior citizen advocates and behavioral health experts say. The first nine months of this year, nine of the 50 suicides in the county - 20 percent - were among people age 65 and older. Most were men. Five died of self-inflicted gunshots. First Deputy Coroner Richard Kuntz anticipates the numbers this year will grow since historically most suicide deaths in Bucks County occur between Labor Day and New Year's Day. Overall, county suicide rates are highest among ages 30 to 50, but the county is seeing more self-inflicted deaths among older adults, a trend expected to continue as the Baby Boom generation grays, Kuntz revealed at a recent Bucks County Suicide Prevention Project Task Force forum. "It's something that is happening that shouldn't be happening," he said.

Senior citizens - who represent about 14 percent of Bucks' population - accounted for 20 percent of its suicides in 2007, the highest percentage since 2004. In the last five years, 19 people age 80 or older committed suicide. The oldest was 92. Last year, nine of the 65 people who killed themselves in Bucks were age 65 or older. Most were at least 70 years old, according to county coroner statistics. "The reason it's a growing concern is because we don't see them in crisis," said Sharon Curran of Lenape Valley Foundation, which has launched a new program targeting isolated seniors with behavior health needs.

Taboo subject: Suicide is a taboo subject, especially for older men, mental health experts say. They are the group least likely to ask for information or access available mental health services. They might not

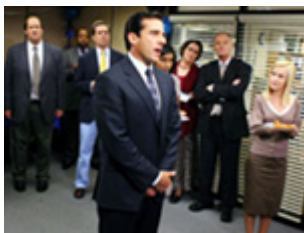
feel they have a mental health issue. But significant suicide risk factors exist among the elderly, including social isolation, loss of independence, declining physical health, a spouse who is ill or dead, and distress over financial problems, experts say. Older adults also are more sensitive to medication changes, which can leave them more confused and less clear thinking, said Elizabeth Fredland, a Bucks County Family Services Association social worker who specializes in geriatrics.

Many older adults see depression as sign of weakness or failure. The social stigma of mental illness is so strong among some senior citizens they refuse antidepressants or psychotherapy, even if they are diagnosed. Depression among the elderly increases as other physical illnesses develop, but family and friends may dismiss its classic symptoms, such as forgetfulness, a decline in personal appearance or dramatic changes in daily routine. If the person lives alone, or has no regular social interaction, odds increase symptoms will go unnoticed. "People just expect that is normal and a lot is written off that they are getting older. In a younger person it would stand out right away," Fredland said. She also worries people are too quick to write off elderly suicides as health-related. "Why not the year before, why did it change all of a sudden?"

Murder-suicide is another deadly combination on the rise among older married couples nationally and locally. Last July, an 89-year-old man and his 84-year-old wife were found dead in their Burlington County, N.J., home, an apparent murder-suicide. Police went to the home after family contacted them, concerned about a message they received from one of the victims. At least eight murder-suicides among elderly couples have been reported in New Jersey in the last three years. Experts say key factors in such cases are depression and a strong sense of responsibility by the husband toward his wife.

In neighboring Montgomery County, suicides among people age 65 and older have averaged about 12 a year from 1997 to 2007. Most were white men in their 70s, but there is no clear increasing trend, said Tony Salvatore, director of the Montgomery County Suicide Prevention Task Force. The elder suicide problem is an extension of the adult suicide situation involving mostly white men who mainly take their lives with guns, Salvatore said. "We're not going to seriously impact suicides in these groups until we aim suicide prevention measures at all adult white males and overcome their unwillingness to seek help with problems that put them at risk of suicide: depression, alcohol and firearms, to name three," he added.

## In the news...



### AFSP and Other Organizations Urge Entertainment Industry to Refrain from Using Suicide/Mental Illness for Comedy

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

In light of a recent episode of NBC's "The Office," AFSP, the American Association of Suicidology, Suicide Awareness Voices in Education, Mental Health America and the National Alliance on Mental Illness are calling on all within the entertainment industry to refrain from using suicide and mental illness for comedic entertainment. "While we understand that suicide and

mental illness has been made light of in everything from cartoons to sitcoms, there comes a point when jokes can go too far and are potentially dangerous and offensive," AFSP Executive Director Robert Gebbia said. "This is not about censorship. Instead, we want to encourage those in the entertainment industry to be more responsible when portraying suicide and consider the possible harmful effects."

In "The Office" Halloween episode that aired on Oct. 29, Michael Scott (Steve Carell) fakes a suicide in an attempt to scare kids visiting Dunder Mifflin. The graphic depiction of the suicide method in front of children is irresponsible and dangerous. "The episode's graphic, mock portrayal of a suicide was more than bad taste. It created a public health risk of the kind the U.S Surgeon General and others constantly battle against." NAMI Executive Director Michael Fitzpatrick said. "Hollywood has creative rights, but we ask that they be exercised responsibly, not recklessly."

Research has shown that graphic and sensational depictions of suicide in the media can lead vulnerable individuals, especially teens and young adults, to die by suicide using the same method. This phenomenon is called suicide contagion. To help reduce risk of suicide contagion and encourage safe depictions of suicide in entertainment the Entertainment Industries Council and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration developed recommendations for those in television and film. In addition to increasing risk for contagion, using suicide for humor can be extremely insensitive to the millions of people across the country who have lost loved ones to suicide, adding to their pain and trauma. Furthermore, certain ways of depicting suicide and mental disorders can contribute to increasing stigma and misconceptions that reduce the willingness to seek help when in crisis.

"The entertainment industry plays a critical role in informing public opinion," said Dr. David Shern, president and CEO of Mental Health America. "It can perpetuate the stigma and misunderstanding surrounding mental illness or it can work to enlighten and educate. It is time they become accountable and choose to play the part of educator." Those who would like to contact NBC in this regard or for more information, visit: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

## Why Jim Moret Changed His Mind

*By Michelle Burford*



At first glance, "Inside Edition" chief correspondent Jim Moret appears to have it all: a wife of 27 years, three children, a California home, and a stellar 25-year career during which he served as a CNN anchor. Yet, in 2008 when the lawyer and journalist fell into a financial crisis that sunk him into a depression, he contemplated ending his life. Moret chronicles his journey from despondency back to hope in the forthcoming memoir, "The Last Day of My Life." He uses his life-altering experience to explore a single question: If this were the last

day of my life, how would I live it? Through a series of vignettes Moret presents in the book, the husband and father re-discovers what he cherishes most. Learn more about how Jim beat his depression here: <http://www.aolhealth.com/condition-center/depression/suicide-jim-moret>

## Mental Health America Calls On President To Reverse Policy Of Not Sending Condolence Letters To Families Of Soldiers Who Complete Suicide

January 12, 2010

Mental Health America is calling on President Obama to reverse a long-standing, unwritten policy of not sending Presidential letters of condolence to the families of service members who have completed suicide. A resolution adopted by Mental Health America's (MHA) Board of Directors states that a condolence letter can help eliminate the stigma and shame associated with suicide and provide emotional support to families. "The lack of acknowledgment and condolence from the President can leave these families with an emotional vacuum and a feeling that somehow their sacrifices may not have been as great as others who died while in the military," the resolution states. MHA is also circulating an online petition through its Facebook page. "Our nation face a critical challenge as we welcome our troops back from war," the petition state. "After bravely risking their lives for our country, these heroes and their families often return to strained relationships, depression and even Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Our response as a grateful nation is critical, and there is a near epidemic of suicides among our Armed Forces." Last month, in an effort initiated by Reps. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) and Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.), 46 House members sent a letter to the President asking him to reverse the policy. "By overturning this policy on letters of condolence to the families of suicide victims, you can send a strong signal that you will not tolerate a culture in our armed forces that discriminates against those with a mental illness," the lawmakers wrote. MHA and the House members also noted that current military funeral procedure treats both suicide and death in combat the same. President Obama asked for a review of the policy several weeks ago. The White House said last month that it expects the review to be completed soon.

### AFSP wins \$25,000

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

Incase you have not heard yet, AFSP placed in the Top 100 charities in the Chase Community Giving Program via Facebook. Thanks to everyone who voted and encouraged others to vote. This is a huge victory for suicide prevention (two other suicide prevention organizations placed in the top 100 as well). In addition to the \$25,000, the recognition suicide prevention will receive from this program will go a long way in helping bring more attention and awareness to this important cause.

### Policy Update: Medicaid Well-Child Visits and Mental Health Checkups

<http://www.teenscreen.org/policy-update-epsdt-nov>

The Medicaid well-child visit requires assessment for early identification of mental illness, but a review of state programs reveals that mental health screening rates are low. Massachusetts sets an example for improvement. 2008 Massachusetts Data Show Increased Rate for Screening at Well-Child Visits; Rate Climbs from 16 to 47 Percent. See the website for more details.

### New Locations for Suicide Prevention

[www.teenscreen.org](http://www.teenscreen.org)

A review published in October's *Current Opinion in Pediatrics* finds that schools, primary care settings and emergency departments are key locations for early identification of youth mental illness and suicide prevention. Validated screening tools identify suicide risk in adolescents who may otherwise go unnoticed—highlighting the opportunity to use a variety of settings to assess adolescents. The Columbia Suicide Screen, the Pediatric Symptom Checklist and the Guidelines for Adolescent Depression in Primary

Care (GLAD-PC), as well as the Risk of Suicide Questionnaire in emergency departments, were found effective in assisting health professionals in finding at-risk patients. Primary care and emergency department settings were found to be particularly well-equipped to initiate further assessment for positive screens. Considerations include additional training to help non-mental health professionals feel better prepared to make appropriate evaluations and integration of efficient referral systems.

### Associated Press: Millennial Generation Has More Anxiety

<http://www.teenscreen.org/news-headlines>

Today's youth are five times as likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues than their Great Depression era counterparts, according to a recent San Diego State University Department of Psychology study. Researchers analyzed responses to the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) from 77, 576 high school and college students between 1938- 2007. There was an overall increase in the number of participants who indicated symptoms of a mental health disorder, including depression, which rose from one to six percent. The study will be published in a future issue of the *Clinical Psychology Review*. Jean Twenge, Ph.D., the study's first author cites the increasing influence of popular culture, growing expectations for financial success and pressure to succeed, as possible reasons for this increase. Researchers also hypothesize that growing divorce rates and instability in families might also be an underlying factor. "It's another piece of the puzzle — that yes, this does seem to be a problem, that there are more young people who report anxiety and depression," said Twenge in an interview with the *Associated Press*. "The next question is: What do we do about it?" Further studies will seek to determine contributors to this increase and elucidate potential implications for improving mental health counseling and treatment.



### New Report Highlights Women's Mental Health Concerns

<http://www.paspi.org/News.php>

*Action Steps for Improving Women's Mental Health*, a new report from the Office of Women's Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services highlights mental health issues specific to women. The report calls for increased understanding of the role of gender in mental illness, and for improvements in the way mental illness is diagnosed and treated in women. Among the concerns discussed are higher rates of major depression, anxiety disorders, and attempted suicide among women compared to men. A companion booklet, written for consumers, is also available online: *Women's Mental Health: What It Means to You*. <http://download.ncadi.samhsa.gov/ken/pdf/OWH09-PROFESSIONAL/ActionSteps.pdf>.

### Colleges See Rise In Mental Health Issues

by Deborah Franklin

October 19, 2009

They may not tell their roommates or even close friends, but on college campuses all across the United States, more students than ever before are seeking psychiatric help, according to recent national surveys of campus therapists. And it's not just for homesickness and relationship problems, says the University of Michigan's Daniel Eisenberg. He directs the Healthy Minds Study, a multicenter study that queries primarily students, but also a sampling of college counselors, about mental health issues, including the prevalence of clinical depression, anxiety and eating disorders on campus. Eisenberg says his findings dovetail with those of a large national survey of counseling center directors, led by the University of Pittsburgh's Robert Gallagher. "One of the questions is whether they're seeing an increase in the number and severity of students with mental health problems," Eisenberg says. "And over 90 percent [of college

counseling services] are saying yes to that question." Just one example: In 2007, around 15 percent of students reported having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lives; that's up from 10 percent in 2000.

Knowing When To Ask For Help: Some are first hit with the illness in college. Stanford University senior Amanda Gelender found herself battling a deep depression for the first time her freshman year. After weeks of going it alone, exhausted and "crying under the covers for hours" in the dorm, she says, she finally called her doctor. She was eventually diagnosed with bipolar disorder and found significant relief, she says, with the right medication and other support that enabled her to stay on campus and even keep up her near 4.0 grade average. Still, for years, she never told friends, professors or dorm-mates of her diagnosis or ongoing struggle. "I felt like the most isolated person in the world," she says of that time. "I didn't feel like anybody would understand what I was going through." Last January, Gelender broke her silence. She's the co-founder of a student theater group called Stanford Theatre Activist Mobilization Project (STAMP), and for a project last winter, STAMP solicited anonymous true-life letters from classmates living with depression, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other mental health problems. In January, Gelender and the group dramatized the accounts as monologues in their theater production, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*.

*Radio story and Web audio produced by Cindy Carpien.*

Listen or read full story here: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113835383>.

## Can Americans Be Happier? New Series Focuses on Emotional Health

[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)

January 4, 5, and 6, 2010, on PBS The Emmy Award-winning team of Vulcan Productions and the producers of NOVA have created a three-part series that explores improving our social relationships, learning to cope with depression and anxiety, and becoming more positive, resilient individuals. The series was produced by Kunhardt McGee Productions. *This Emotional Life*, a three-part television series premiering January 4, 2010, tackles issues around improving social relationships; resolving negative feelings, such as depression and anxiety; and searching for greater happiness. The television series is part of a 2-year, multi-platform public education project supported by SAMHSA and developed in collaboration with Vulcan Productions, NOVA/WGBH, PBS and other organizations. The project aims to create awareness, understanding, and solutions surrounding emotional well-being.

# Today's Hot Topic

FREE Podcasts at [www.wqed.org](http://www.wqed.org)!!

WQED Changes Lives...

WQED Multimedia Pittsburgh, honored with the Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award for Station Excellence and twelve other Emmy Awards in 2006 and 2007, creates, produces and distributes quality programs,

products and services to engage, inform, educate and entertain the public within its community and around the world. The following two podcasts are available on [www.wqed.org](http://www.wqed.org).



### Losing Lambert: A Journey Through Survival & Hope

This OnQ documentary follows the emotional story of a Pittsburgh-area mother who lost her 16-year-old son to suicide. Kathy O'Hern Fowler would emerge as one of the region's best-known advocates for "Survivors of Suicide." The program also focuses on Pittsburgh research into suicide risk factors. Highlighting this thoughtful evening of discussion is the premiere of a new OnQ documentary, *Losing Lambert: A Journey Through Survival & Hope*. The 30-minute documentary tells the story of a Pittsburgh area mother's long road to recovery after her 16-year-old son's suicide, and explores first-of-its-kind UPMC research on the brains of teen suicide attempters.

Visit: [http://www.wqed.org/tv/onq/specials/losing\\_lambert.php](http://www.wqed.org/tv/onq/specials/losing_lambert.php)

### OnQ Close-up: Teen Suicide

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers and young adults, yet the subject is often avoided or ignored until tragedy strikes. Sadly, it is nearly always misunderstood by the families who have been impacted, as well as the general public. Stigma, shock, grief and blame are just a few of suicide's unfortunate ramifications. WQED's flagship program, OnQ will present a 90-minute special edition focusing on teen suicide prevention, research, support and outreach. A panel of our region's recognized experts will share their views and engage a participatory studio audience made up of mental health professionals, social service providers, educators, and survivors of suicide including parents and other family members. Visit: [http://www.wqed.org/tv/onq/specials/teen\\_suicide.php](http://www.wqed.org/tv/onq/specials/teen_suicide.php).

# Survivor's Corner...

*A survivor is a term used to describe someone who has lost a loved one to suicide.*

### Suicide is real.

Survivor's corner is new! It has been created as a place to share **YOUR** stories, poems, thoughts. Help other survivors relate and help those who have never experienced this loss begin to understand...Simply submit material to Terri at [terbacher@dcu.org](mailto:terbacher@dcu.org).



### Survivors of Suicide, Inc. (SOS) Mailing List

*by Tony Salvatore*

SOS is an all volunteer nonprofit organization that runs suicide loss support groups in all five southeastern PA counties (and in Camden County, NJ). SOS also works with the DCSPATF, task forces in other counties, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention on conferences, trainings, and suicide loss

awareness events like the Annual Memorial Candle Lighting in Rose Tree Park. SOS is now planning an e-Newsletter to disseminate items of interest to suicide survivors and others concerned about suicide loss issues. This will include updates on the SOS support group meeting times and locations, SOS publications, and items contributed by the readers. Anyone interested in joining the mailing list for SOS's e-Newsletter can send an e-mail with their name and e-mail address to [phillysos@hotmail.com](mailto:phillysos@hotmail.com). The first issue should be released in the Spring. More info about SOS is available at <http://phillysos.tripod.com>. (SOS does not share mailing lists, hard copy or electronic, with any other organization or group.)

### Last Call for 2010 Survivor of the Year Nominations

Making meaning from your loss is a step in the grief process we all hope to achieve. Those who work in outreach to survivors willingly admit it's self-healing. Helping others is often motivated by the need to find the silver lining, the gift in such tragedy, meaning from loss. The American Association of Suicidology recognizes the efforts of one special survivor every year with the National Survivor of the Year Award, presented at the AAS conference, this year in Orlando, Florida, on April 23, 2010. Submit nominations to the survivor award chair, Patty Lloyd, by January 31, 2010 at [pattylu7273@msn.com](mailto:pattylu7273@msn.com). For more details, see <https://app.e2ma.net/app/view:CampaignPublic/id:25465.2726944790/rid:f2084c6f0a83cb139f3e09096664d05a>.

## Do you want to get involved and help others?

### **Two Opportunities!**

**AFSP's Home Outreach Program:** Surviving a suicide can be an isolating and confusing experience. Survivors may find that those around them have difficulty understanding what they are going through. Often, a survivor may not know anyone else who has had this experience and doesn't know where to find reliable information or where to learn about local resources. Most survivors who have met others who have also experienced suicide loss can attest to the power of this shared connection. It is often a fellow survivor who can recommend a book, connect someone to a support group, or simply provide reassurance. In March of 2007, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) therefore introduced the "*Survivor Outreach Program*" at its first workshop in New York City and continues in our local area. **AFSP is looking for new volunteers for this program!** If you are a survivor (have lost a loved one to suicide), are at least 2 years away from your loss, and feel you are ready to help others, please contact Pat Gainey at 215-746-7256 or [pgainey@afsp.org](mailto:pgainey@afsp.org) for more information and training dates!

**AFSP/SOS Facilitator Training June 4 & 5, 2010:** Research has shown that support groups with those who have had similar experiences are invaluable to many throughout their journey of healing. Survivors of Suicide, Inc. has many such support groups in the Delaware Valley and is always seeking new facilitators. This is not therapy and facilitators are simply others survivors who wish to help others in their grief process. To attend facilitator training, you must be a survivor who is at least 2 years away from your loss and you feel ready to help others. Training will be held in Center City Philadelphia Friday from 1-9PM and Saturday from 8AM-3:30PM. Registration Fee is \$175 but scholarships are available. If you are interested, please contact Pat Gainey at 215-746-7256 or [pgainey@afsp.org](mailto:pgainey@afsp.org) for more info.

## A survivor's story:

**Editor's Note:** *Dr. Poland is one of my role models as a fellow psychologist and professor who has also lost a father to suicide. His courage, strength and ability to*

*make meaning from his loss in order to help others have inspired me greatly in my own career! Terri E.*



## Surviving My Father's Suicide: Making a Difference for Others

*By Dr. Scott Poland*

*Extracted from Surviving Suicide:*

*A publication of the American Association of Suicidology*

I was surprised to learn for his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday my father would first be visiting my brother in Kansas City and then me in Indiana. My father did not like to travel, especially without my mother. He had suffered a heart attack two months previously but seemed well on the road to a complete recovery. We had a short visit and in retrospect, I have remembered a few prophetic remarks he made: "I do not want to live to be an old man," "I will not need someone to take care of me," "I want you to have my guns." I did not know that a few days before his visit to me he had given my brother the Marine division book he was so proud of that chronicled the battles he had fought in the South Pacific. I, like many survivors, did not grasp the meaning behind those words and actions and had no idea that suicide could actually happen in my family.

My recollection of the last day with my father is crystal clear even after 35 years. I was worried about his health, especially his alcoholism, but knew that I would be seeing him in a month for Thanksgiving. He shook my hand goodbye as he never was one for hugs and headed to his plane. I watched him go and was waiting for him to turn around and wave. He never turned to look back. Later that evening my mother called and her exact words were, "Something terrible has happened"! The moment I heard those words I knew that my father had returned home and shot himself.

It was during this time I was finally having success in college after having been kicked out for poor scholarship. It was the era of the Vietnam War and I was grateful after my service to have another chance at college. I was majoring in psychology when my father came to say his goodbye. In afterthought, I had a dim memory that perhaps a text book of mine had a page or two on suicide warning signs.

Seven years later I had finished my doctorate in psychology, was the director of Psychological Services for a massive Houston, Texas, school system, and was faced with three students dying by suicide in a short period of time. The superintendent asked me to address these tragedies and I joined the American Association of Suicidology and started preparing. I discovered that youth suicide was a difficult issue to address in schools and communities. In my quest to lead my team of psychologists and to reach out to educators, I wrote my first of four books, published in 1989, entitled *Suicide Intervention in the Schools*. It was about what I learned and believed schools needed to know. The other three books focused on the broad topic of school crisis but all three thoroughly covered suicide prevention. My numerous chapters on suicide and crisis intervention have also been featured in the last four volumes of *Best Practices in School Psychology* published by the National Association of School Psychologists.

I had begun to speak openly to groups about my father's suicide and wanted my 8-year-old son Jeremy to hear about the circumstances of his grandfather's death from me and not someone else. When I told him that I wanted to talk about the death of his grandfather, he said, "I know that he had a heart attack and died." I confirmed that statement but included that he actually took his own life by suicide two months after his heart attack. He looked at me and said, "You lied to me!" I responded that I did not lie as he did have a heart attack and I was waiting for him to be older and to have a better chance of understanding suicide. Jeremy was quiet for awhile and then said, "Dad, you should not feel bad because your parents weren't psychologists like mine are and they didn't teach you all the things I know about feeling good and

being able to solve problems!" Recently I was an expert witness on behalf of a school that told the truth when a 6-year-old sadly viewed the body of a suicide victim on the bus ride home from school. The attorney for the parents questioned why I believed that she needed to be told the truth about the death and pointed out that I had not even told my son about the suicide of his grandfather until he was 8. I returned with my own question, how did he know I had not changed my opinion since?

A few years ago I served as the president of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and set a goal of increasing suicide prevention efforts for the 25,000 members of the association and working more closely with AAS. It was also my pleasure to assist AAS in the development of the School Suicide Prevention Accreditation Program.

I have been a national crisis responder for 11 school shootings, acts of terrorism in Oklahoma City, NYC, and Washington, D.C., served in the aftermath of several hurricanes, and have responded to numerous youth suicide clusters. My experience and writings have given me many opportunities to speak in every state, many foreign countries, and before the U.S. Congress four times. The primary interest is usually for information on school violence but I always include suicide prevention. I readily share that my life has been affected by a suicide to let those in the audience know that I have some understanding of what survivors go through. The emphasis is always on how we can all work together for prevention.

*Scott Poland, Ed.D., is a psychologist and a founding member of the National Emergency Assistance Team for NASP. He retired from his Texas school director position after 25 years and teaches graduate classes at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale. He is the coordinator of the Suicide and Violence Prevention Office at NSU and the co-director of the SAMSHA GLS Grant. His e-mail address is spoland@nova.edu.*

### 2010 AAS Conference addresses complex issue of murder-suicide post Columbine

*Extracted from Surviving Suicide: A publication of the American Association of Suicidology*

Murder-suicides are defined as the intended single act of one person murdering one or more persons followed by, within a short period of time, the completion of their own suicide. This is a complex and silently destructive problem that continues to devastate families all over America. On **Friday, April 23** at the AAS Conference, there will be a panel presentation entitled "*Homicide-Suicide: A 2010 Update*". The discussion will explore this aspect of suicide from a number of perspectives. The panel will include Sue Klebold, whose son, Dylan, was part of the Columbine High School shooting tragedy. Mrs. Klebold's story was recently featured in *O Magazine*.

## Recent Events

### DCSPATF's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Suicide Prevention Conference

*Coping with Suicidality: Caring for the Caregiver*

**November 19, 2009**

This year's conference was held at Springfield Country Club in Springfield, PA. Highlights from this year's conference include Jason Spiegelman, a professor and author, who opened with a keynote presentation entitled "*Don't Forget about Me.*" Other highlights included a panel presentation with **Delaware County**

**District Attorney, Mr. G. Michael Green, Esq.** This panel, entitled *"Coping with Suicide Loss in your Professional World"* was very well received and included Robert Sing, DO (private practice), Jaye Pedante, EdD (Springfield School District), Lt. Bill Clark (Springfield Police Department), Bob Kilmer (Aston Twp. Police Department Chaplain), David Moran, LCSW, CAC (private practice), and Jason Spiegelman, MA.

**Dr. Fredric Hellman** was our luncheon keynote, who presented on the newly formed **Delaware County Suicide Death Review**. As always, Dr. Hellman's statistics and local data were interesting and enlightening. We'd like to thank our **break-out session presenters**, Linda Falasco, LCSW, Tony Salvatore, MA, Kevin Caputo, MD and Colleen Healy, MA, Leslie Lipson, LCSW, Jason Spiegelman, MA, and Sheldon Kovach, Esq. for their thoughtful presentations! Ending the day was **Cindy Holms** of the Delaware County Intermediate Unit, a renowned speaker who shared personal narratives of strength and courage in moving past the many hurdles life may throw at us. Her closing, entitled *"There's no way to the other side but through it"* touched many of us!



Keynote, Jason Spiegelman, has a full house!



D.A. Mike Green moderates a lively panel!



Our dynamic Delco Medical Examiner!



And, a very thoughtful closing by Cindy Holms!

**\*DCSPATF Dedication Award\***

**Ellen Chung-Finnegan** was awarded the *DCSPATF Dedication Award* for her outstanding commitment and dedication to the task force since its inception! Ellen does a lot of work 'behind the scenes' and this task force would not be all that it is without her... *Thanks, Ellen!*

A few noteworthy comments from conference evaluations:

- Openness of presenters; commitment to this important issue; having different professions come together
- Speakers were excellent, well prepared, presented well and provided very meaningful information.
- The keynote, the panel, and individual presentations were captivating and educational
- Speakers sharing their own experiences
- Variety: Mental health, legal, medical, funeral director - I liked the different points of view.
- Networking - meeting in person the people I've spoken to but didn't recognize
- The honesty and openness of the panel and speakers
- Very thorough. I appreciated the inclusion of variety of disciplines
- Diverse panel members and speakers. Refreshing to hear detective/police perspective.
- The availability of food; excellent venue in Springfield Country club
- Solid program; articulate, relatable speakers; honest approach
- Interesting, down to earth interesting educators on a taboo subject

AFSP's 11th Annual National Survivors of Suicide Day

*Saturday, November 21, 2009*

*University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia*

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) held it's 11<sup>th</sup> annual Suicide Survivor's Day on November 21, 2009. Survivors of Suicide loss joined together from over 240 locations in the U.S. and abroad for support, healing, information and empowerment. The day of conferences connected survivors through a 90-minute program, viewed simultaneously around the world by webcast, satellite and DVD. The program includes a blend of emotional support and information about resources for healing for survivors of suicide loss. This broadcast is now available on the AFSP website so survivors can watch it free of charge, on their own computers, anytime. *Save the date for AFSP's 12th National Survivors of Suicide Day Saturday, November 20, 2010. Find the video: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org).*

## **Upcoming Local Events**

**Our own Delco Task Force Events can be found below in purple...**

Thursday, January 28, 2010 10:30am CST: *CRAZY: A Father's Search through America's Mental Health Madness. Free Web Conference:* Pete Earley will use his personal story to illustrate how difficult it is to get a loved one with a severe mental illness meaningful help. He will specifically focus on how and why persons, such as his son, often end up in our criminal justice system and why that is wrong. In addition to telling his son's story, he will describe the results of a nine month investigation that he conducted as a journalist inside the Miami Dade County jail where he followed persons with severe mental illnesses through the criminal justice system and out into the community to observe what services were available to them. The goal of his presentation is to explain why jails and prisons have become our new

asylums, why this is wrong, why it wastes money, and how communities can better serve persons with mental illnesses by focusing on a variety of successful programs that help people recover rather than punish them for being ill. As always, CEUs will be available. Our website: [www.MIMHTraining.com](http://www.MIMHTraining.com).

January 29, 2010: Please note our DCSPATF General Meeting has been rescheduled to February 18<sup>th</sup>!

February 3, 2010: Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI) is holding a Community Forum & Resource Fair at Penncrest High School. Our new website is: [www.hcicare.org](http://www.hcicare.org).

February 9, 2010 & June 8, 2010: The Delco Consumer and Family Advisory Committee would like to extend an open invitation to all Delco HealthChoices members to participate in our upcoming meetings to receive current updates on new and existing programs or to pose any questions you may have about existing services. Meetings are from 1-2PM at the Delco Office of Behavioral Health at 20 S. 69th Street in Upper Darby (3<sup>rd</sup> floor). Questions? Contact Shannon Thomas at 610-713-2479.

February 12, 2010: To celebrate the one year anniversary of Prysm Youth Group, there will be a **Valentine's Dance**. Last year's dance brought about 50 youth from all over the county. Reserve the date! For more information, visit [www.prysm.vpweb.com](http://www.prysm.vpweb.com).

February 18, 2010: **DCSPATF General Membership Meeting** from 9-11AM at Springfield Baptist Church. Church (184 N. Norwinden Dr., Springfield, PA 19064). Bob Kilmer, Aston Police Department Chaplain and member of the Law Enforcement Chaplains of Delaware County, will be presenting. To RSVP or for Questions, contact Nikole at [nheilmann@wpsd.k12.pa.us](mailto:nheilmann@wpsd.k12.pa.us) or 484-461-9619 x3013. **All are welcome!**

April 21-24, 2010: **43rd American Association of Suicidology Conference** on "*Families, Community Systems and Suicide*" at Hilton Walt Disney World, Orlando, FL.  
<http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/education-and-training/annual-conference>

May 1, 2010: **DCSPATF Walk/Run for Suicide Awareness at Ridley Creek State Park, Picnic Area #17** (1023 Sycamore Mills Rd, Media Pa 19063). Registration begins at 8AM and race begins at 9AM. Free t-shirt, refreshments & raffles/prizes. Register now at [www.runtheday.com](http://www.runtheday.com) for \$25 now or \$30 on site! For more info call 610-558-8100 x118. It's a long way away, but Save the Date on your calendar NOW! Now, you have no excuses! RAIN OR SHINE.

May 14 or May 20, 2010: The STAR Center is happy to announce that we will hold a full-day training institute this spring in Pittsburgh. This year's program, presented by Kimberly Poling, LCSW, and Tina Goldstein, Ph.D., is *entitled "Therapeutic Strategies for Intervening with Common Adolescent Problem Behaviors."* Visit <http://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/> for final dates and info.

May 21, 2010: **Call for Presentations: Bridging the Divide: Suicide Awareness and Prevention Summit** at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO. Breakout sessions will include presentations targeted towards a specific age group, differing disciplines and professions addressing suicide issues, and ethnic, gender, military, sexual orientation and geographical differences. Deadline for submissions is February 1, 2010. For more information, contact [Sally@carsonjspencer.org](mailto:Sally@carsonjspencer.org).

September 10, 2010: Tentative Date for **Survivor's of Suicide Candlelight** at Rose Tree Park.

September/October, 2010: Holcomb will host the **ASSIST 2-day training**. Keep your eye out!

October 3, 2010: **AFSP's Out of Darkness Local Walk** in front of the Philadelphia Art Museum at 10 a.m. Visit [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) for details.

November 20, 2010: **AFSP's 12th Annual National Survivors of Suicide Day Conference**, held on at Univ. of PA, Campus-Biomedical Research Building. Contact [pgainey@afsp.org](mailto:pgainey@afsp.org) or visit [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org).

Ongoing: **PFLAG Support for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays**. Please pass info along:

**Delaware County**

Second Thursday of the Month at 7:30  
Drexel Hill Baptist Church  
4400 State Road  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026  
Contact Pat Pitzer at 610-259-2356 x207  
Or at [pflagdrexelhill@gmail.com](mailto:pflagdrexelhill@gmail.com)

**Chester County**

First Tuesday of the Month at 7:00  
Unitarian Church of West Chester  
501 South High Street  
West Chester, PA 19380  
Contact Lynda Carcione at 484-354-2448  
or at [lynda895@comcast.net](mailto:lynda895@comcast.net)

Ongoing: **Prysm Youth Group** meets every Wednesday night from 6:30 until 8:30. We continue to meet at Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems on Baltimore Pike in Media. Visit us at: [www.prysm.vpweb.com](http://www.prysm.vpweb.com).

Ongoing: Support education for those who care about a **substance abuser**. The first 3 Tuesdays of every month at Holcomb, 126 E. Baltimore Pike, Media, PA, 19063. Contact 484-444-0412 for more info.

~ Let us know of **your** upcoming events - email them to [terbacher@dciu.org](mailto:terbacher@dciu.org) ~

Don't forget to RSVP!

Get involved: New members welcome!!!

DCSPATF General Membership Meeting

February 18, 2010 9-11AM

Springfield Baptist Church

Email or Call Nikole at [nheilmann@wpsd.k12.pa.us](mailto:nheilmann@wpsd.k12.pa.us) or 484-461-9619 x3013

# Resources

## Book Review:

### THE OTHER SURVIVORS

*Extracted from Surviving Suicide: A publication of the American Association of Suicidology*

*By David Lester*

The term "survivors" typically refers to those who lose a loved one or significant other to suicide. But there are others who are, in some sense, "survivors" too. Some people kill themselves in a public manner. In my book with co-author Mark Lindsay, *Suicide By Cop* (2004), I describe incidents in which people commit suicide by provoking police officers to shoot them. These officers are traumatized by these incidents, and the trauma is increased if the community believes that the officer shot the victim without any provocation. The officers report depression, anger at the suicide, feelings of terror during the incident, and agitation afterward. They later experience flashbacks, nightmares, and insomnia. Rivard and colleagues (2002) found that 11% of the officers experienced one or more symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and 3% have the full syndrome. Read the full article here:

<https://app.e2ma.net/app/view:CampaignPublic/id:25465.2726944604/rid:e75762253558031d19e2f3720c9276fa>

We continue to seek your articles to make this newsletter interesting and informative! So, please forward any research, local events, info about your organization, book reviews, or your own personal stories to us. Simply email them to me at [terbacher@dciu.org](mailto:terbacher@dciu.org).

**Special thanks to this quarter's contributors:** Tony Salvatore, Colleen Healy, Beth Mingey, Pat Lufkin & Nikole Heilman!

Newsletter edited by Terri Erbacher, Ph.D.  
Delaware County Intermediate Unit

For more information or to get involved, visit  
[www.delcosuicideprevention.org](http://www.delcosuicideprevention.org)  
Mailing Address: DCSPATF, Box 175, 4 State Road,  
Media, PA 19063-1413