

HOPES OF WISCONSIN

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Dear Friends,

It must be spring. We are once again planning our annual Walk for Awareness. This year we have a challenge. For those of you that don't live in the Madison area you may not know that our beloved St. Raphael's Cathedral has been destroyed by fire. They have been housing our walks and our fabulous luncheons that have given us a real spirit of community to our annual walk. Luckily for us Pat Derer and Sue Howell have made the necessary calls and made arrangements for our walk to be held at Warner Park at 1625 Northport Dr. in Madison on May 14, 2005. So we will be together and will be able to walk in a park atmosphere. We will have the quilts on display at the park and we will have the prizes as usual. This year we will draw the winning tickets of the prizes and you can check them after the walk so you can claim your prize. We will draw for the large prizes as everyone joins us to celebrate the success of the walk at the finish line.

I know it is important for all of you to know what HOPES does with the money that you raise for Suicide Prevention in WI. This year all of the work was done by volunteers. We used our funds to pay for travel expenses and for the literature that we distribute as we consult with communities on how they can best promote suicide prevention in their communities. We consulted with Shawano, Mt. Horeb, Lake Mills, Verona, Waunakee, Eau Claire, Marathon, Forest, Oneida and Vilas Counties and others by phone. We spoke at conferences or had displays about suicide prevention in Lac Du Flambeau, Waukesha, Green Bay, WI Dells and WI Rapids and back at WI Dells for 2 conferences in 1 day. We presented QPR presentations in Pewaukee, Shawano, Portage County, Waunakee, Verona HS Staff, Menomonee Falls Depression support group, Menomonee Falls Community and Bayfield School Staffs and Community.

We have relationships with the State of WI and are on the Suicide Prevention Initiative task force. We also work with the Mental Health Association in Milwaukee County and the Department of Public Instruction in working with schools and communities. We work with the WI United for Mental Health committee who is working to reduce the stigma of mental illness in our communities. We join in the WI Prevention Network activities and promote prevention. We were a sponsor of the WI Clearinghouse Conference. We collaborate with Rogers Memorial Hospital and join in their conferences and do community presentations with them.

Mary Doemel, Jill Collins, Melissa Abel, Ann Abel and Susan Opheim went to Washington, DC to attend Span's National Awareness Event last September. We brought the WI quilts and displayed them at the Lincoln Memorial and read the names of our family and friends. We visited the Senators and Representatives and reminded them of the importance of suicide prevention. The Garret Lee Smith Act was passed which provides money for communities and colleges for suicide prevention. Representative Baldwin and Senator Kohl were sponsors of that bill. We gave all the Senators and Representatives Certificates of Appreciation if they voted for that bill. It was fun being able to thank them personally.

In November HOPES collaborated with the Mental Health Assn. of Dane County and hosted the National Survivors Day at St. Mary's Hospital. Mary Doemel an advocate with HOPES worked with the Support group in Green Bay and Bellin Hospital and they also had a Survivors day on November 20th. It's a great Survivor Event. Pat Derer and her daughter Tina work tirelessly for the Walk each year. Blaine, Tina's husband is the MC for the prizes. In addition Pat's sisters and mother come and from all of the state to help us and support them. Tina's kids have made special gifts for other kids coming to the Walk. This is one story of tireless volunteers that make HOPES special. Don's Oak is also the store that they own and work for. They gave us our first \$500.00 that enabled us start our first walk many years ago. You are keeping the memory of Daryl alive through your efforts. Thank You!

New Board Members

Mary Moldenhauer, Sue Howell and Jill Collins have joined Sara Leikness, Pat Derer, Dennis Gates and Susan Conlin Opheim on our Board of Directors. Welcome! For more information please see our Website www.hopes-wi.org.

HOPES NEW WEBSITE

Our dedicated Webmaster Theresa Grove works tirelessly to keep our website up to date. She has been working with the Goltz Seering Agency to create our new website. So take a minute and see what our NEW Website www.hopes-wi.org has to offer you and others that are researching suicide prevention in Wisconsin. Thank you Theresa and The Goltz Seering Agency.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention holds a National Walk in Chicago

Visit www.afsp.org for the details for the 20 Mile “Out of the Darkness” walk on July 16-17.

A Walker Tells Her Story

My brother Mark committed suicide on February 24, 2001. Our family, like so many other families, didn't see it coming. We went through the shock, turmoil and heartache that a suicide brings to the survivors. In April of that year I noticed an ad in the Sunday Wisconsin State Journal. It was a picture of worn athletic shoes that caught my eye. The ad told of the HOPES walk in May, which raises funds for the prevention and education of suicide. Finally, something we could do as a family to honor Mark. I called everyone in the family and a group of 15 of us signed up for the walk.

The day of the walk we were all still in that shell-shocked mode that survivors can quickly recognize. I was part of a group I had never wanted to join. We put on our t-shirts. My Mom had made plaid ribbons that we wore. The family joke is that Mark's favorite color was plaid. It felt good to be doing something physical. Just the simple act of walking in that shirt with all the others who have shared this experience is powerful and healing. We gathered at the Capitol at the end of the walk. The HOPES quilts were on display. The picture in each square tells a story of that person's life. It puts a very real face to the word suicide. As the names were read aloud you could feel the shared emotions. At the luncheon, after the walk, our family laughed and talked and just enjoyed spending time together. People came over and asked about the plaid ribbons and we talked about Mark. Giving out the door prizes was an upbeat ending to the walk.

There is compassion and comfort and sharing at the walk. There is also information on suicide and how we can work to prevent it. So, each year Mark's wife, son, step children, mother, sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews and their families – including a new generation of kids that Mark will never know – gather to remember and honor his life at the HOPES walk.

Please join us!
Sue Howell

Another Survivor of Suicide Tells Her Story

As many of you know Suicide is very scary and is one of the leading causes in death today. I know from personal experience how much heartache it can cause to a friend, or a family when someone takes their life into their own hands and ends it.

My personal experience has been very challenging for not only myself, but also family and friends. When I was in high school I was dating a wonderful boy that for some reason thought he did not have a future and decided to end his short life at the age of 19. His family and friends were shocked and grief stricken. I was devastated at the age of 17. I had never known anyone who took his or her own life. Then about a year later, my boyfriend's sister in law took her life.

A 1988 graduate of my high school took his life and when you live in a small town you know everyone and their family very well, we were all upset and shocked.

Then another friend decided to take his life, at a very young age as well. I thought I had enough as I had a total of 4 young adults take their life before I turned 19! Each time I had so many emotions going on, I didn't know what to do. One day I would be sad, the next day I would be mad at them for leaving us.

By age 25, I seemed to have a handle on things and thought life was as it should be. I was getting married and life seemed great. Until our groomsman and my husband's close friend decided to take his life in June 1997. William knew him for years; I had known him for 5 years. We all worked together, went out together and felt like family. What a great person. What a shock when the news came that he had decided to take his life instead of turning to us to help. Why!? Why!? Why does this continue to happen to all the good people I know and love? That was the big question. I had no idea; however I am not going to let that stop me! I have decided to do what ever I can in preventing anyone else I love to end his or her life.

If you have ever lost a loved one, you know how helpless it makes you feel. That is why I have dedicated myself to helping as many people as I can by joining the HOPES Walk. You can help too by sponsoring us or joining us and getting your own sponsors.

Walk with me. Walk for a friend or a loved one. Let's do whatever we can to put a stop to such pain in our lives. There is HOPE! Together we will help those in need!!!

Written By: Nikki L. Crary