

# Survivors After Suicide

YOUR PATH TOWARD HEALING

A Program of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center • April/May/June 2007 • Volume 20, No. 1 • Published Quarterly

## *Fifty Years, Thousands of Lives*

By Kita S Curry, Ph.D. and Andrew E Rubin

What do you say to parents after a child's suicide? More than 50 years ago, Dr. Edwin Shneidman faced this dilemma. A GI receiving treatment at the Brentwood VA took his life, and Dr. Shneidman's supervisor asked him to write a letter to the veteran's family.

Hoping to find an explanation for the soldier's desperation, Dr. Shneidman asked Dr. Norman Farberow to join him in what became a lifetime calling for each of them. They went to the morgue, where they found a suicide note written by the GI—and hundreds written by others who had taken their lives. What light might these very personal good-byes shed on the dark subject of suicide? This and other studies led the two psychologists to create the first 24-hour Suicide Prevention Center in the nation and a new discipline, the study of suicide.

Soon joined by Dr. Robert Litman, Sam Heilig, and David Klugman, over the years the pioneers at the Suicide Prevention Center created a vast body of knowledge that has relieved suffering and saved countless lives. Concluding that most people take their lives in moments of unbearable emotional pain, in 1958 they established a 24-hour crisis line to help callers through their darkest hours. It didn't take long for the call volume to exceed their small group's capacity, which prompted them to develop a volunteer counselor training program which has been replicated throughout the world.

Studying suicide also put them in touch with bereaved friends

and family ("survivors"). Already traumatized and devastated, stigma isolated survivors from common supports and exacerbated their pain. The Suicide Prevention Center staff provided individual therapy to help survivors regain their will to live, but along the way they discovered that survivors farther along in the grief process were uniquely able to provide comfort and hope. This led to the creation of specialized suicide bereavement groups, co-led by a survivor and a trained professional.

Now part of Didi Hirsch rather than a stand-alone endeavor, the Suicide Prevention Center remains committed to the vision of these extraordinary pioneers. In fact, many of them remain involved, particularly Farberow, Heilig and Litman, who donate their time training volunteers, educating international visitors and serving as consultants.

Each year, our nationally accredited crisis line receives almost 20,000 desperate calls. Our prevention efforts also include community outreach, which teaches youth and adults how to identify and respond to the warning signs of suicide, with special outreach to minority communities and older adults—groups that are at great risk because stigma inhibits them from seeking help.

Our bereavement services help avert severe and lasting trauma after the loss of a loved one to suicide, including an increased risk of suicide. We offer 20 bereavement groups a year throughout the County. In addition, we recently

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## *What A Difference A Year (and a Little More) Makes*

By Rachel Zients Schinderman

When I first sat down in my eight-week session and we went around the room introducing ourselves, I told my story. I told of my father. His hanging. How I was only four. How his death is; how I see myself. How I am defined by this action.

I wear it for all too see.

I remember announcing, pleading maybe, that I wanted, needed to be more than just Rachel whose father died when she was four. Not just died, suicided. More than Rachel from Rachel and The Upside Down Heart, the children's book my mother wrote about our grief. And though I said all that, I immersed myself more.

I jumped in completely. I ran in his honor at *Alive & Running* and raised money and shouted to all who would listen about what I was doing. I became the editor of this newsletter and kept writing about him. I attended potlucks and advisory meetings. I found a community. And it felt right. It was what I needed.

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### *Save the Date!*

**June 9-10, 2007**  
OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALK

**June 9, 2007**  
SAS SUMMER POTLUCK

**September 30, 2007**  
ALIVE & RUNNING FOR SUICIDE  
PREVENTION 5K/10K

*See Calendar of Events on page 3*

*Survivors After Suicide (SAS) helps people resolve their grief and pain in their own personal way, and helps them move forward in their lives, positively and productively.*



Rick Mogil

## Welcome Home Rick!

By Lyn Morris, Director of Suicide Prevention Center

As the Director of the Suicide Prevention Center, I would like to happily announce Rick Mogil as the new Survivors After Suicide Program Coordinator. I would also like to personally thank Patricia Serrano, our wonderful administrative assistant, for assisting me in keeping the SAS program running efficiently during the absence of a Program Coordinator.

Rick has been well-known to the readers of this publication for his series of insightful and emotional articles concerning his brother's suicide in 2003. You may also know Rick because he has been an extremely involved volunteer in the SAS program for years. He has been a valued member of our SAS Advisory Committee, he is an active member of our Suicide Response Team, and he regularly co-facilitates the SAS support groups in the San Fernando Valley, and helps out with the monthly support group. Three times a year, he also comes to Didi Hirsch on a Saturday to tell his story of suicide loss in order to help train new Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line counselors.

Rick is a natural fit for this position because he has a strong commitment to our survivor community. He will be responsible for not only the SAS program, but our Suicide Response Team, and our community outreach.

He is passionate, understands what helps survivors and always has crisis line cards and brochures on hand for anyone who needs them. He is a kind, warm person who is always willing to help. He has described taking on the SAS Program Coordinator position as "feeling like I am coming home." Welcome home Rick!

Rick can be reached at (310) 751-5370 or rmogil@didihirsch.org.



Hello! I am Marilyn Nobori. I am a survivor. My only child, Catherine Aiko Nobori, completed suicide four years ago. She was 14 years old. Suicide was not part of my world until that moment. It has become a major part of my life since.

## Stepping Up

One of my first phone calls was to SAS and Jay Nagdimon, former director of SPC/SAS. At a time when I could not conceive of what the next hour would bring let alone the next day or week, Jay said to me that some people find "activism" helpful. That one sentence reached beyond the layers of hurt, tears, numbness to the heart of who I was. It offered something familiar, a light or path through the pain. From there I sponsored suicide prevention speakers at church, and as I journeyed far enough through the pain to a place I felt I could help others, I began facilitating bereavement groups at Glendale Adventist Medical Center. I eventually became a volunteer at SAS, co-facilitating the San Gabriel eight-week group and leading the San Gabriel Valley Drop-in Group.

As I journey with you, I hope my time as Newsletter Editor will give you an opportunity to share your experience and share in other's experiences. I hope the Newsletter continues to keep you connected to this special community.

*With Hope,  
Marilyn*

## Lifekeepers Memory Quilt

Our quilts are displayed at national meetings, suicide-related conferences and other events. All 50 states have come together in this joint effort to educate the world about the need to reduce the incidence of suicide. You can share your pictures and sentiments by dedicating a square in the Lifekeepers Memory Quilt, offering the image of your loved one. A \$20 fee covers the cost of material, labor and postage necessary to create your visual tribute. You will receive a cotton square and instructions on how to proceed.

Yes, I want to create a quilt square to honor:

Send the material and instructions to me:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my \$20 check or money order made out to Mary Halligan to cover the cost of material, labor and postage.

Mail to:  
Mary Halligan, 21422 Grant Avenue, Torrance, CA 90503  
or call Mary at (310) 316-4392 for information

## Volunteer Highlight: Mary Gayman



In every organization there are stars. This month's volunteer, Mary Gayman, is one of our stars. Mary has been a compassionate volunteer for 17 years, starting with

the Crisis Hotline in 1989. She supervises 10 hours per week on the hotline, is part of the SRT (Suicide Response Team), has worked with the SAS eight-week group in the past, and currently leads the West Los Angeles Drop-in Group and co-facilitates the San Gabriel Valley Drop-in Group.

Mary's calm, supporting presence is also found at the training sessions, at the SAS Advisory Board meetings, at the *Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K* and she is always the first to arrive for set-up and last to leave after cleaning up at our semi-annual potlucks.

Mary says it was a fluke that brought her to SPC. As an "empty nester," she answered an ad for volunteers. Her amazing gift to instantly establish rapport with anyone is so apparent when you talk with her. It is the perfect match for the crisis hotline. Starting as a phone counselor, she became a supervisor in 1990. Dr. Farberow and Carole Chasin brought Mary, also a survivor, into SAS in 2000 to lead the West Los Angeles Drop-in Group.

When asked about her tenure, Mary responds, "It's the people." She explains that we all have been injured, yet we are strong, we reach out, and we accept each other as we are. It is a precious community.

Mary works in accounting and her family is a major focus for her life outside the Center. She enjoys being with her grandbabies. She also volunteers at the

Los Angeles Ronald McDonald House and has made three trips to Mexico for eye clinics with the Burbank Noon Lions.

We appreciate Mary's gifts and thank her for her dedicated participation in the SAS community.

### *How To Volunteer*

We always need people to share their energy and talents!

- Volunteers for SAS may co-facilitate support groups, offer telephone support counseling, help with filing, plan events, etc. Call Rick Mogil at (310) 751-5370.
- Volunteering as a counselor for the Suicide Prevention Center's Crisis Line involves seven Saturdays of training and a minimum commitment of one year (one weekly four-hour shift). Call Dave Smith at (310) 751-5330.

## *"Food for Thought" Summer Potluck*

June 9, 2007 | 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center  
4760 South Sepulveda Boulevard  
Culver City, CA 90230

Our potlucks are a nurturing environment - a safe place to express our feelings and share the memories of our loved ones. And just as we nurture our souls and spirit, we need to include our wellbeing and therefore we "break bread" with other survivors.

In some cultures to "break bread" is more than just dining together, it is sharing one's home, one's hearth and the memories they evoke.

Please join us to "break bread" and share memories. Bring your, or your loved one's, favorite dish.

You can also send in a recipe for a dish that is special to you and your loved one, which will be included in a "Food for Thought" booklet to be shared with Potluck participants. Please include a brief note on why this recipe is special.

Please e-mail Patricia Serrano at [pserrano@didihirsch.org](mailto:pserrano@didihirsch.org) or call (310) 751-5373 to RSVP with the category of food you will bring (appetizer, entrée, dessert) and your recipe.

## *Calendar of Events*

**SAS Summer Potluck**  
Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center  
June 9, 2007  
For more information, call Rick Mogil: (310) 751-5370

**Out of the Darkness Overnight, New York**  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
June 9-10, 2007  
For information, call (888) THE OVERNIGHT or visit [www.theovernight.org](http://www.theovernight.org)

**12th Annual National Suicide Prevention Awareness & Training Event**  
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA)  
July 18-21, 2007  
Washington, DC (Doubletree Washington)  
For more information, visit [www.spanusa.org/spate](http://www.spanusa.org/spate) or contact SPAN at [info@spanusa.org](mailto:info@spanusa.org)

**XXIV World Congress: Preventing Suicide Across the Lifespan: Dreams and Realities**  
International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP)  
August 28th - September 1, 2007  
Killarney, Ireland  
For further information, visit [www.iasp2007.org](http://www.iasp2007.org)

**Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K**  
Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center  
September 30, 2007  
Westchester Parkway, Los Angeles  
For more information, call (310) 390-6612

## What a Difference

Continued from page 1

I thought I had stumbled upon my calling. I should be a grief counselor. I should use this knowledge, acquired and experienced, to help others. It was also a selfish pursuit. I thought it would help me as well. I went through training at a grief support facility called Our House. I cried as I took a tour thinking of the little girl I was and how this would have been a nice place for her.

Now I had this new place, this community of support. And it was the best time and place for me to find it, because I was just about to be done with it.

As I sat in my training, as I edited this newsletter, something new was beginning. A new life. I say this not metaphorically -referring to myself and a new path I embarked on. But literally, a new life. I was pregnant with my first child. And suddenly, I did not want to know about death. I did not want that energy. But this was my world. This was my comfort zone. If I am off or emotional or anything short of perfect, it can be explained away by my trauma as a child. At times, I admit, I used it as a crutch. But now, I truly did not want it around. I was not running from it. I would never deny it. I just did not want to live in it anymore.

And so, I did not become a grief counselor. I did not run in this last *Alive & Running*. I am stepping down as editor. I am now a proud mother. I cannot shield my son from death or bad things. I know this, but I can try. Even if that means refocusing myself.

As a daughter I have spent most of my life wondering about a life that is not here anymore. As a mother of a child who came into this world fighting and struggling, reminding me how precious and uncertain this life can be, I realized this is where my energies are needed. It was this community, that eight-week session, that allowed me to feel strong enough to step aside from it all, to "graduate." To know that it is not all. It is not everything that I am. Though it is a part of me. A big part.

I went in with a wish, to no longer feel confined by this image and though it would be easy to use the term "leave," that I leave it all behind, we all know that is never the case. I bring my father, and all the work that goes along with that with me. I am ready to add to that image, ready to embrace and celebrate other things. And so, I say thank you to this community for welcoming me in and for taking such good care of me. I was able to find something new in my thirty plus year struggle to understand. I was able to see it is okay to never completely understand. It is okay to explore other things. I hope this discovery is the greatest compliment I could pay.

## Contributions

November 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007

A million thanks for your generosity!

### IN MEMORY OF

**Gil Adame, Jr.** from Mary Bosak, Jim Denton, Margie and Joe Hernandez, Maureen Kelly, Barbara Korthe, Ann Sullivan, Vivienne and Lou Versace, and Phillip R. Vincent

**Laura Roanne Cole** from Barbara and Melvin Cole

**Beth Gallamore** from Nancy Walsh

**Steven K. Hansen** from Ethel Hansen

**Stephen Lelewer** from Vivian and Jerry Kelley

**Rebecca Suzanne Lemmon** from Ann and Robert Lemmon

**Daniel Lichstein** from Jennifer and Bud Gruenberg

**Harold Lloyd** from June and Tommy Takenaka

**John Lynch** from the English Department at Marymount High School, the L.A. Leggers, Theo Lacy, Paul Mendonca, Thomas Morphopoulos and Ana K. Nogen, Eileen Ogilvie, Renee Opell, Pamela Rector, Dinah Rowley, and Aileen Wong

**Stephen M. Stokes** from Christine and Stephen R. Stokes

**Norman Vaughan** from John W. Alden, Myrna Allen, Michael B. Allmon & Associates, Mary Arndt, Best Nails, Linda R. Brooks, Kathy and Stephen Campbell, Sharon Caserma, Kita Curry, Ph.D and Mr. Peter Curry, Mr. and Mrs. R.C. Davies, Anne Finestone and Charles Dolan, Galorath Incorporated, Zvia Hempling, Barbara J. Hornichter, Linda and Haofeng Huang, IBM Corporation, D. and P. Jokanovich, Nancy and Pierre Joujon-Roche, Kathryn and Thomas Kilgore, Sandri Kramer Roll and Robert Roll, Barbara Krull, Charlotte and Russell Lesser, Patricia and Richard Lucy, Daniel Muth, Kathy Rink, Sylvia and Barry Seymour, Sally and Robert Shafton, Janet Vansoest-Brown, Steven Wong, Pam Woodford, and Virginia L. Zimmerman

**Garland Williams** from Judge and Mrs. Donald F. Pitts

### IN HONOR OF

**Terry Jones** from Stephanie and Roy Kaneshiro

**Janine Lichstein's 60th birthday** from Dorothy and Ed Lewis, and Jeri Weiss and Walter S. Baer

**Dorothymae P. Nelson** from Sylvana Guidotti, M.D., Duane McWaine, M.D. and David Huebner

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On behalf of the survivor community, we want to express our gratitude and appreciation for the dedication and commitment that Rachel demonstrated by being our newsletter editor (and so much more!). All the best to you and your family Rachel!

# Out of the DARKNESS

Overnight: July 22-23, 2006  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

## My Experience

I lost my 29 year old son Eric Spencer on November 2, 2001 to suicide and once again I walked 20 miles overnight. This was my third walk for this wonderful cause. And again my best friend, my sister Stephanie, walked with me. She is my greatest support and inspiration to keep going. Thank you Stephanie. Why did I walk? To bring awareness to the public on suicide prevention and mental illness. That is not the only reason I walk. I walk for my wonderful son Eric, my nephew Michael Roberts, Renee's son Nicholas, Andi's daughter Tonya, and Susan's partner Laura, John and Rumi's son Tom. I can go on and on. There are too many to name. With the money we raised by doing this walk we hope to bring the number of suicides down.

To semi quote my precious son Peter; "Remember why you walk. It is for the people who can't." Thank you Peter.

The opening ceremonies were held at Crissy Field in San Francisco with the beautiful Golden Gate Bridge as the backdrop. As always, these opening ceremonies are quite emotional and this day was no different. Maybe a bit different because one of the speakers survived a suicide attempt. He told his story of pain and depression and how he wanted to end his life. He told how he stood on the Golden Gate Bridge and decided to end it all. As he jumped, he recalled saying, "*I don't want to die!*" And he survived! It made me wonder how many of our loved ones said the very same thing but it was too late.

As the sun began to set, all 1,200 of us started the long journey through the chilly night. As it got darker we began to see lots of glow-sticks and flashlights (we walked through some pretty dark areas). As we walked, we heard bits and pieces of conversation. I met a woman who was by herself and was walking for her son who died 8 years ago. She let me know that the pain never goes away. Of course I am so aware of this. The more we walked the harder it became. This was more mentally and physically

challenging than the last 2 walks. (S.F.= HILLS!) Yes, lots of hills. I will admit there was a time when I didn't think I could finish, but then I remembered why I was there.

There were eight pit stops along the way. The volunteers who worked these areas were wonderful. They made sure everyone was okay and made sure everyone took time to drink and rest. Along the route there was a woman we called the "tambourine lady." She would drive the route all night long and bang away on her tambourine to encourage us to keep going. What an inspiration she was!

When we approached the end of the walk we saw the luminaries. Once again we put candles in bags with written messages to our loved ones on the outside of the bags. And once again there were too many! They kept going on and on. When we reached the end of our journey we saw so many "people pods." You see it was quite chilly and they had a warming tent where you could get a mylar blanket to wrap yourself to get warm. Talk about a strange sight! Shortly after coffee and bagels, they started the closing ceremony. As the sun was rising, there were speeches of our accomplishment and how much money was raised. The sight of the sun rising over the bay was enough to get me crying. Crying for my loss, crying for never being able to see, talk, or touch my son Eric. Crying for all the lost lives due to suicide. And crying happy tears because I was able to walk for such a great cause.

I will continue to do these walks as long as I am able and if the time comes when I can no longer walk, you can bet I will be one of the volunteers (maybe a tambourine lady)!

Thank you all for your support. I know you were all cheering me on!

*With love and peace,  
Bobbie Mathers*

IN MEMORY OF MY LOVING SON ERIC SPENCER  
12/29/1971-11/02/2001

## 2007 Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K



Sunday, September 30, 2007 at Westchester Parkway, Los Angeles  
For information, call (310) 390-6612 or visit [www.didihirsch.org](http://www.didihirsch.org)

# Resources for Survivors and Suicide Prevention

## HELP LINES

**Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's Suicide Prevention Crisis Line**  
Los Angeles and Orange Counties: (877) 7-CRISIS (727-4747)  
Everywhere: (310) 391-1253

**Hopeline:** 24-7 national suicide hotline  
(800) SUICIDE (784-2433)

**Lifeline:** 24-7 national suicide hotline  
(800) 273-TALK (8255)

**Trevor Helpline:** Suicide hotline for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth  
(800) 850-8078

## RESOURCES

**American Association of Suicidology (AAS)**  
(202) 237-2280  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)**  
(888) 333-2377  
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

**Before Their Time:** A musical resource to provide comfort to people after the death of someone close  
[www.beforetheirtime.org](http://www.beforetheirtime.org)

**Compassionate Friends:** For parents grieving the death of a child; chat room from 10 a.m. - 11 p.m.  
National: (630) 990-0010  
Los Angeles: (310) 368-6845  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Crisis, Grief, and Healing:** Articles of interest and forum  
[www.webhealing.com](http://www.webhealing.com)

**Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center:** Nine sites throughout Los Angeles provide mental health care for those with severe mental illness and little money  
(310) 390-6612  
[www.didihirsch.org](http://www.didihirsch.org)

For survivors, click "Lost A Loved One?" at the top to go to the Survivors After Suicide program homepage ([www.suicidepreventioncenter.org](http://www.suicidepreventioncenter.org)); current and past issues of the SAS newsletter are available as pdf's through this site

**Fierce Goodbye:** From a documentary focusing on survivors  
[www.fiercegoodbye.com](http://www.fiercegoodbye.com)

**Friends for Survival**  
[www.friendsforsurvival.org](http://www.friendsforsurvival.org)

**Grief Net:** Grief support; can connect you with various resources  
[www.griefnet.org](http://www.griefnet.org)

**Heartbeat:** A peer support group offering empathy, encouragement and direction following the suicide of a loved one  
[www.heartbeatsurvivorsaftersuicide.org](http://www.heartbeatsurvivorsaftersuicide.org)

**International Association for Suicide Prevention**  
[www.med.uio.no/iasp](http://www.med.uio.no/iasp)

**International Friends and Families of Suicide**  
[www.friendsandfamiliesofsuicide.com](http://www.friendsandfamiliesofsuicide.com)

**Living With Loss Magazine**  
(888) 604-HOPE (4673)  
[www.bereavementmag.com](http://www.bereavementmag.com)

**Name a Star:** Name a star in remembrance of a loved one  
[www.nameastar.net](http://www.nameastar.net)

**National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI):** Provides support for family members of those with mental illness  
National: (800) 950-6264,  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)  
California: (916) 567-0163,  
[www.namicalifornia.org](http://www.namicalifornia.org)

**National Mental Health Awareness Campaign:** A public service campaign to educate the public about mental health issues and eradicate the fear, shame and stigma commonly associated with mental illness  
(877) 495-0009  
[www.nostigma.org](http://www.nostigma.org)

**National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide (NOPCAS)**  
(866) 899-5317  
[www.nopcas.com](http://www.nopcas.com)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**Parents of Suicide Mailing List:** Submit your email to join the mailing list  
[www.groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/parentsofsuicides](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/parentsofsuicides)

**Parents of Suicide Support Site**  
[www.parentsofsuicide.com](http://www.parentsofsuicide.com)

**Sibling Survivors:** Michelle Linn-Gust's website  
[www.siblingsurvivors.com](http://www.siblingsurvivors.com)

**Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education (SAVE):** Provides information on depression and suicide  
(952) 946-7998  
[www.save.org](http://www.save.org)

**Suicide Discussion Board:** Open for the purpose of suicide awareness, support, and education  
[www.suicidediscussionboard.com](http://www.suicidediscussionboard.com)

**Suicide Memorial Wall:** A tribute to lost loved ones  
[www.suicidememorialwall.com](http://www.suicidememorialwall.com)

**Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network (SPAN)**  
National: (202) 449-3600,  
[www.spanusa.org](http://www.spanusa.org)  
California: (760) 753-4565,  
[www.span-california.org](http://www.span-california.org)

**Suicide Prevention Resource Center**  
(877) GET-SPRC (438-7772)  
[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)  
[www.sprc.org/thespark](http://www.sprc.org/thespark) to receive the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's online newsletter

**Suicide Reference Library:** Provides helpful information to those who are involved in suicide awareness, grief support, and educational activities  
[www.suicidereferencelibrary.com](http://www.suicidereferencelibrary.com)

**Suicide Wall:** Honoring Vietnam Veterans who have taken their own lives  
[www.suicidewall.com](http://www.suicidewall.com)

**SurvivorsAfterSuicide Yahoo Group:** Created by a member of our survivor community, this group can be used to post photos and chat with other survivors  
<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SurvivorsAfterSuicide/>

**Survivors of Suicide:** A website dedicated to those who have lost a loved one to suicide  
[www.survivorsofsuicide.com](http://www.survivorsofsuicide.com)

**Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Project, Light for Life International:** Teen suicide prevention  
(303) 429-3530  
[www.yellowribbon.org](http://www.yellowribbon.org)

# Fifty Years, Thousand of Lives

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partnered with Our House to develop a specialized suicide support group for grieving adolescents. Last, but not least, because it takes some people many years to learn about our bereavement services, in 2004 we created a Suicide Response Team that works in tandem with the Mayor's Crisis Response Team and the LAPD. With commitment and compassion, our 20 Suicide Response Team volunteers travel to the scene of a suicide, any hour of the day or night.

We have come so far in the last 50 years. The suicide rate in Los Angeles has decreased dramatically since then, while increasing in many other communities. But, we still have so much to learn and do. As part of a national network of crisis lines, we are participating in studies that will expand our understanding of the many faces of suicide and further increase our success at saving lives.

We proudly carry on the legacy of Drs. Farberow and Shneidman. No one should die of despair.

## Suicide in the U.S.

- ◆ Each year, emergency rooms treat about 240,000 survivors of suicide attempts
- ◆ Twice as many Americans die of suicide as AIDS
- ◆ 20% of Americans have lost a family member to suicide
- ◆ 60% know at least one person who has taken his or her life
- ◆ Prior attempts increase the risk of death by suicide
- ◆ Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15-24 year-olds
- ◆ Overall, the risk of suicide rises with age
- ◆ Almost all individuals who take their lives have *treatable* brain disorders, e.g., depression, anxiety, mania, schizophrenia, alcoholism, etc.

## Warning Signs

- ◆ Withdrawal from normal activities
- ◆ Giving away possessions
- ◆ Talking about death or suicide
- ◆ Comments like "you'd be better off without me"
- ◆ Changes in sleep, mood or behavior
- ◆ Despair or anxiety over losses or failures
- ◆ Neglecting ones appearance and hygiene
- ◆ Destructive or reckless behavior
- ◆ Feeling worthless and/or hopeless

## What You Can Do

- ◆ Listen without criticizing or scolding
- ◆ Show that you care and want to help
- ◆ Ask if person is thinking about hurting or killing self
- ◆ Ask if s/he has a plan, and, if so, what is it
- ◆ Remove access to means of suicide
- ◆ Inform friends and family members
- ◆ Help him/her get to a professional or a hospital
- ◆ Give him/her a crisis line number
- ◆ Call a crisis line for guidance

## SAS Group Happenings

The San Fernando Valley Groups have a new home! Starting mid-March, the groups have been meeting at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center, 501 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank in the conference room of the Hope Conference Center. The drop-in group meets the second Saturday of each month at 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Next meeting dates are June 9, July 14, and August 11. Contact Rick Mogil at (310) 751-5370 for the dates of the next eight-week group.

The San Gabriel Valley Drop-In Group commenced in February. The group meets the last Tuesday of each month at San Marino United Church of Christ, Choir Room, 2560 Huntington Drive, San Marino (the corner of Del Mar and Huntington, enter parking lot behind the church from Del Mar). Meeting time is 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Next meetings are June 26, July 31, and August 28.

## Stan Lelewer Receives Volunteer of the Year Award

Stan Lelewer, Didi Hirsch Board of Directors Executive Vice Chair, received the County of Los Angeles Volunteer of the Year Award on April 30, 2007. At a ceremony honoring 79 volunteers countywide, Stan was recognized for his more than ten years of service to Didi Hirsch.

Congratulations Stan!

**Photo left:** Stan received his Volunteer of the Year Award from Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich

**Photo right (L to R):** David Ryu, Deputy to Supervisor Yvonne Burke, Mary Lelewer, Stan Lelewer, and Kita S. Curry, Ph.D., Didi Hirsch President/CEO



## SURVIVORS AFTER SUICIDE NEWSLETTER

A quarterly publication of Survivors After Suicide (providing support groups for those who have lost a loved one to suicide), a program of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center.

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Editor: Marilyn Nobori | SASNews@sbcglobal.net

Editorial Board: Lois Bloom; Samuel C. Bloom; Norman Farberow, Ph.D.; Rick Mogil; Lyn Morris, LMFT

Designer: Joanne Uy

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