



COMMUNITY FOR HOPE
OF GREATER OSHKOSH, INC.

Special points of interest:

- Read through our 8-page December newsletter
- Over 60 members and community visited CMF for our Open House
- Teen SOS meeting in Appleton offers Potluck and Remembering Tree
- Extra words of encouragement to help through the holidays
- Donate to support our cause in spreading the word that survivors are not alone.
- Sign up for an email version newsletter!

"Survivors of Suicide: Helping Those Cope with the Loss of a Loved One by Suicide"

Volume 9 Issue 9

December 2010

Survivors of Suicide (S.O.S.) Community for Hope

Faces of Hope help Community see Warning Signs at CFH Open House

by Adam Campbell
Editor

School counselor Leah Maes knows firsthand what the warning signs of self-harm are at Traeger Middle School. She sees it every week even though it's difficult to intercept those warnings in a cyber-world. "Kids bring complaints of cyber-bullying to me and we log into their account and I handle those complaints," Maes said. Cyber-bullying on social networks is one of the factors that can lead to teen suicide. Teachers, parents and students need to be aware of suicide warning signs and notify professionals who can help.



School Counselors Marvel Bakri & Leah Maes cyber-bullying and identifying warning signs of depression and suicide.



Aubrey Wesner says Delta Sigma Phi will run a float for CFH at the Holiday parade.

Suicide doesn't only affect family and friends of loved ones; it also affects local professionals like Barry Busby. Busby said during his 13 years as Winnebago county coroner he has seen over 250 suicides. His team refers survivors to organizations like Community for Hope, but it doesn't make his job any easier. "Everyone we can save is one more family to whom we don't have to explain why this happened," Busby said, "There's no reason a suicide needs to occur if help can be given in time."

Sometimes concerned friends may tell Maes that someone's Facebook status reads, "No one would miss me if I were gone." Teachers and parents can't intercept those messages without the help of social network peers. It's why suicide awareness is so important in the schools. "Our goal, with the 18,000 dollars we raised from the Doctor's Recital, is to put a folder about suicide awareness in the hands of every child in Winnebago County by next year," said Director Doug Bisbee.



Winnebago Co. Coroner Barry Busby describes his pain consoling survivors.

Area Support Groups in Northeast Wisconsin

Giving Teens Chance to Remember Loved Ones during these Holidays

At our new December Teen SOS meeting we will be asking everyone to come with pictures, stories, and mementoes of their loved one. This meeting is a potluck, please bring a dish if you would like. You may also bring an ornament for the little remember tree that we have set up in our room. The Teen SOS Group meets the **third Monday every month**, 6:30 - 8 PM, at the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Appleton. We hope to see you there.

Survivors of Suicide (S.O.S.) Ripon, Appleton, Oshkosh

Service: **once a month no cost** support groups for those who have survived the death of a family member, friend or special person by suicide. Minimum age to attend is 14 years.

Ripon 1st Thursday. Immanuel United Methodist Church, 401 W. Fond du Lac St. 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Appleton 2nd Monday. Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2600 E. Phillip Ln. 920-731-0849. 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Oshkosh 3rd Thursday. United Way Oshkosh Area, 36 Broad St. Oshkosh. 6:30-8:30 p.m.

For more information email: doug.bisbee@communityforhope.org

A Time to Mourn Support Group

A six-week grief group offering support for adults who have experienced the death of an adult loved one. Co-led by professionals trained in grief support. Offered three times per year. This is a **closed group** which means adult members must make a

6 week commitment to this course and the group does not allow new members in the duration of the 6 weeks. You **must call to sign up** prior to the first session.

Held: Lutheran Homes of Oshkosh, 225 N. Eagle St. Oshkosh, WI 54902

Contact: Lutheran Homes of Oshkosh Chaplain Cathie VanderVelden: 920 232-5274

Cost: Free

General Bereavement Support Group—Oshkosh

General grief support group where attendees are accepted at any time regardless of age or religious denomination. Grief discussions focus on events of the death, related feelings, coping skills, validation, and support for group members.

Held: St. Jude Parish, 1025 W. 5th Ave, Oshkosh, WI 54902 (enter through parish office doors)

Contact: Linda Hillary, MS 920 233-8044

Cost: Free

How often: First and Third Thursdays of each month

Time: 7:00—8:30 p.m.

Drop-in Grief Groups— Appleton & Oshkosh

Service: Open to any adult grieving the death of a loved one at not cost. Refreshments and handouts are provided.

Contact: Deb Kosmer, Affinity Visiting Nurses 866 236-8500

Email:

kosrd@ministryhomecare.org

Oshkosh: 1st Thursday of each month at St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran Church

1100 E. Murdock Ave. Oshkosh. Groups at 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Appleton: 1st Tuesday of each month at Thompson Community Center 820 W. College Ave, Appleton. Groups at 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Cost: Free

Living with Loss- Appleton

Service: Six-week grief group offering support to adults who have experienced the loss of a loved one. Offered in Fall, Winter, and Spring at Theda Care Home Hospice at 2600 S. Heritage Woods Dr. Appleton.

Contact: Rachel Seppi 920 716-1006 or 800 984-5554

Members of Delta Sigma Phi and Zeta Tau Alpha from UWO in front of the CFH float for the Oshkosh Holiday Parade early Nov.



The Director's Corner

Doug Bisbee

Fall 2010 has been a busy and exciting last couple of months for Community for Hope:

- * On September 11th, our first annual Suicide Awareness Walk saw 600+ individuals brave rainy weather to gather in Kaukauna to stand together in our grief and resolve to continue to raise public awareness of suicide and such contributing factors as depression.
- * On October 3rd, the Doctors Recital took place on the campus of Lawrence University, raising over \$18,000 towards the work and mission of Community for Hope through the efforts of the Fox Valley Medical Society Alliance.
- * On November 9th, over 60 people attended our Community Open House at our new location at the Hooper Community Center, hearing about the efforts and goals of Community for Hope as well as the partnership we share with the Oshkosh Public Schools and other agencies.



Furthermore, Community for Hope has been busier than ever this fall, working collaboratively with various school districts throughout Winnebago County and the Fox Cities, including Oshkosh, Winneconne, Menasha, Neenah, Kaukauna, and Appleton Schools.

Community for Hope of Greater Oshkosh is an active and highly committed non-profit agency. Together, we are making a difference in raising awareness and addressing preventative measures in regard to suicide!

Dear Friends,

Christmas is not far away and I'm sure you are all thinking about this year's festivities-

will you celebrate 'as usual', sticking with your traditions

OR

will you change something because we know the pain of missing our loved one is acute in our hearts and minds..

we feel their loss so much when family is gathered around our Christmas table and there is someone missing.

For along while after my daughter's untimely death to suicide, I didn't want to do anything 'normal',

and I don't remember when it was exactly I started to think differently and slowly return to my life...

I did not return to 'my old life'... my daughter was such a big part of that.

It was hard emerging from the fog of pain and grief to where I am today, 5 yrs along.

The pain is no longer ALL I can feel, but it bubbles to the surface when I least expect it.

I believe, every time we reach out to someone,

we heal a little part of ourselves.. it is so tiny we don't even realize it is happening.

-Helen Rowell

SOS Christmas Potluck & Remembrance Ceremony



Please join us on Thursday, Dec. 16th at 6:30 PM for our annual SOS Christmas Potluck and Remembrance Ceremony. This is a meaningful time of year to share memories of our loved ones with one another--to remember as we go about the holiday season with them on our mind, they walk in our footsteps just a half step behind.



If you would like, please bring a picture to share and a meaningful ornament for the tree (you will be able to take this home). As always, we will have a candle-light vigil and a time for each one to share a memory, along with a moment of silence. You can either bring a special FLAMELESS candle or we will have some battery-operated candles on hand (we cannot burn regular candles in our new office).



If you will be attending and would like to bring a dish to pass, please let us know! Call or email Jenny Wesner at 379-7966/wes6@charter.net or call Linda Schabloski at 303-0302(no email).



We would love to share with you in recollection and to reminisce while we remember our loved ones so dearly missed. If you are unable to join us, may the holidays be gentle and give you a measure of peace at a time when we are missing them most.



Handling the Holidays when we've Lost Those whom we Love

The Holiday Season: This time of year can be particularly difficult for survivors of suicide loss, so we hope you'll keep in mind that there is no 'right' way to observe holidays. We all have different ways of seeking comfort and remembering our loved ones; the important thing is to do what feels right for you. Remember, you can always choose to do things differently next time.

- Think about your family's holiday traditions. Consider whether you want to continue them or create some new ones.
- Remember that family members may feel differently about continuing to do things the way they've been done in the past. Try to talk openly with each other about your expectations.
- Consider whether you want to be with your family and friends for the holiday, or whether it would be more healing for you to be by yourself or go away (this year).
- Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of an event can be more difficult than the event itself.
- If you find it comforting to talk about your loved one, let your family and friends know that; tell them not to be afraid to mention your loved one's name.
- Some survivors find it comforting to acknowledge the birthday of their loved ones by gathering with his/her friends and family; others prefer to spend it privately.
- Some survivors have found the following ritual helpful for a variety of occasions: *Light two candles, and then blow one out. Explain that the extinguished candle represents those we've lost, while the one that continues to burn represents those of us who go on despite our loss and pain. Simply leave the one candle burning (you can put it off to one side) for the duration of the holiday meal or event. The glowing flame acts as a quiet reminder of those who are missing.*
- Above all, bear in mind that there is no "right" way to handle holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays. You and your family may decide to try several different approaches before finding one that feels best for you.

Excerpted from [Surviving Suicide Loss: A Resource and Healing Guide](#).

Grief Support Groups for Children, Young Adults and Men

Center for Grieving Children-Appleton

Provides monthly peer-to-peer support group for grieving children ages 3 to 18 and their families. Led by trained facilitators and volunteers. Includes supper. No cost.

Where: Boys and Girls Club of the Fox Valley on 117 S. Locust St. Appleton from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Contact: Loris Damerow at 920 731-0555 x. 24 for more info and to pre-register. Or email her at : ldamerow@bgclubfoxvalley.org

New S.O.S. Grief Support Group Valley Adolescents 14-24 years

Where: Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2600 E. Phillip Ln. Appleton on the **third Monday** of the month, 6:30—8:00 p.m. Free. Contact Barb Bigalke by email: bbigalke2@new.rr.com

Grief Relief

Offers ongoing peer support groups for children and teens ages 5 to 17 in the **Fond du Lac** area. Groups are ongoing, meeting once a month. Also offered are groups for adult caregivers. No cost; contact Terri at 920 926-4960.

Men Journeying through Grief

A gathering of men who have experienced the death of a loved one, recent or past. Gatherings include supper, discussion, grief information and resources. There is no cost, contact Deb at 920 727-2000 for meeting times and place.

For more info on grief support groups please email the Fox Valley Grief Network at

info@wichmannfuneralhomes.com

From the Desk of Fr. Rubey . . .

During December, two of the three prophetic religious traditions celebrate significant holidays. Both holidays have gift giving as a major part of the celebration. There is a lot of merriment involved in the celebrations. Last month I wrote about my being thankful for the opportunity to journey with the members of the LOSS family. It has been a very unique journey with far reaching results which have changed how I perceive life and how my belief system has been altered and enriched. This has been my gift from you and during this holiday season know how truly grateful I am to each and every one of you for this gift.

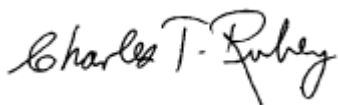
Oftentimes survivors feel unworthy of anything that is positive in their lives such as having a good time or experiencing some pleasure or happiness. Survivors erroneously are under the impression that because a loved one has taken their life, they should be punished and forego any happiness. Naturally, during the initial part of the journey, pleasure and happiness are very difficult to experience due to the intensity of the grief. This is all part of the initial stage of grief. There is no real time frame for how long this aspect of the journey will last. It could very well be weeks or months as survivors traverse this very perilous journey. The danger is that this void of happiness or pleasure could very well become a part of a survivor's life. Survivors feel that because this loved one died from suicide they are at fault because they failed to see the suicide coming or were negligent in detecting how much pain their loved one was in. Due to this seeming negligence, survivors beat themselves up unmercifully and heap all sorts of punishing thoughts and accusations on themselves. We refer to this as self flagellation. From my experience in working with survivors for almost 30 years nothing could be further from the truth. Survivors did not miss anything. Their loved ones never shared the depth of their hopelessness or despair. For whatever reason, their mental illness prevented them from sharing this despairing moment in their lives. They are not to blame for not sharing because their illness was so virulent and paralyzing. They saw suicide as the only answer. For them it was the only way out of this endless cycle of unbearable pain.

During this holiday season I am suggesting that survivors treat themselves to some type of a pleasurable experience as a gift from their dearly departed loved one. The gift should be something that will allow survivors to experience pleasure and happiness. Think of something that in the past brought much joy and happiness such as a visit to a spa or dining at a favorite restaurant or going to see an uplifting play or concert. Experience this pleasure and happiness and let this loved one know that this is a gift from them and is done in their memory to remember the good times that were shared in the past. It is permissible to experience joy and happiness in your life. Very often survivors feel unworthy of pleasure or happiness because a loved one took their life. A loved one died, not the survivors, and survivors have a right to experience happiness and pleasure and joy.

Don't be surprised if you feel some guilt in having a good time and experiencing pleasure and joy. That is a very normal response in the grieving process. Suffer through this guilt knowing that the more you experience these pleasures and joys the guilt will eventually dissipate. The alternative is to continue to punish oneself needlessly due to the pain of a loved one that led to their suicide. Use the gift from a loved one to break out of the pattern of self flagellation and re-enter the life of pleasure and joy. What a great gift from a loved one during this holiday season and throughout the year.

During this holiday season I want to assure each and every member of the LOSS family of my thoughts and prayers and encourage you to do the same for each other-especially for those who have recently joined our family.

Keep On Keepin' On,





Moving On

*It's what everyone
wants me to do
They all think that I should
but **no one** tells me how
Moving on
Is it some kind of a trip?
Does it require a destination?
I hardly have energy
to be where I am
Where would I find more?
Moving on
Away from who I am now?
Away from all I have known?
Away from my pain?
Away from your death?
But where could I go
that all of this
would not go with me?
Nowhere I think
Now if only they'd leave me alone
When I am ready
I will find my own way
To move on while
taking you along.*

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