

News Highlights

- **Three NH survivors recognized for their efforts in suicide prevention**
Melissa Heinen, Former Commissioner John Stephen, and Mike Hill received awards for their efforts in Suicide Prevention.
- **NH Survivors well represented at international AAS Conference**
In April, several NH survivors attended the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) Conference in Boston. In addition, Michael Whitman presented on Music and Healing, Melissa Heinen presented her experience as a survivor, and Catherine Greenleaf had a book signing.
- **Lifekeeper Quilt travels to over 50 locations in its first year**
To reserve the quilt or see it on exhibit, please contact Becky McEnany at NAMI NH at 225-5359, or by email at bmccenany@naminh.org.
- **NH's Survivor resource folder debuts at national Medical Examiner conference**
NH Chief Medical Examiner Tom Andrew and NH Survivor Michael Whitman will present NH's Survivor Resource Folder at the National Association of Medical Examiners' 2008 Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky.

New Hampshire Survivors of Suicide



Newsletter 2008

Survivor Advocacy Highlights

Suicide Survivors Speakers Bureau

As Eileen McNamara, a writer for the *Boston Globe*, said, "Suicide remains the sorrow that still struggles to speak its name" (McNamara, 12/11/07). However, survivors in New Hampshire are trying to change the stigma surrounding suicide by speaking out and sharing their own stories in hopes that it will encourage someone to get help, will let other survivors know that they are not alone and that help is out there, and to let the public know warning signs and resources.

Seven NH survivors participated in a two-day training sponsored by NAMI



NH to train people who have lost a loved one to suicide how to tell their personal story in a manner which is consistent with safe messaging guidelines and which promotes suicide prevention. After the first day of training, survivors were asked to prepare their presentations

and on the second day, they presented to each other, received feedback, and honed their messages. If you have an event at which you would like a survivor to speak, or you wish to participate in a future training, please contact Becky McEnany by email at bmccenany@naminh.org.

NH Survivor Works with Prison System to Effect Changes to Prevent Suicide

Connie Cuddemi sued the NH State Prison when her son died by suicide after having been admitted less than 24 hours earlier. Rather than view her as an adversary, after the law suit was settled and both physical and policy changes were made at the prison, Warden Richard Gerry invited Cuddemi back to see the

changes they had made. Cuddemi praised Gerry and prison officials for the extra effort she has observed in their desire to keep prisoners safe and reduce suicides of individuals who are incarcerated. As a result of these efforts, all prisoners will be screened (asked questions about previous history of suicide or current suicidal thoughts) when they are admitted.

Here is Connie's story in her own words:

I returned a call to my son, Joe. Someone answered, "Wait a minute," and then the phone was hung up. Each time I called, there was no answer. My doorbell rang. Police officers asked if Joe was my son. The officer came in—I was feeling such panic. I was told, "Your son, Joe, was brought to the state prison and, within a short time, Joe hung himself."

See Prison, page 2

The New Hampshire Suicide Survivors Network is a coalition of suicide survivors, joined by some mental health professionals, that is helping to publicize local and national resources that provide support to survivors of suicide (SOS). The survivor network is focused on helping each other with the unique, profound, lingering grief that suicide subjects us to, and which those who have not experienced death by suicide cannot understand.

“I am a survivor. Changes are happening in Joe’s name. It feels wonderful to make changes. I am not finished.”

~Connie Cuddemi

Survivor Advocacy Highlights (continued)

Prison

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I was crying-the pain was unbearable-many downs and a few ups. Time sadly went on...

Strength, time to check on terms I made with the prison to never have this happen again. The area where Joe died has been completely reconstructed-eliminating hazards and adding cameras so the staff can see the area.

Intake staff is now using screening protocols and taking mental health classes. I was asked to write a letter

to the class for prison intake staff about my son’s death, which was horrific. The safety issues were not in place. I am hopeful that these classes will keep them updated on all the positive ways to help the men, understand mental health disorders, and learn about effective medications. The Mental Health Department will [inform] the staff of any new safety information. Seeing these changes has lifted the terror from my mind. I feel wonderful helping to bring about these changes.

Joe had bipolar illness. I miss him every day. But what is happening now in his name will keep everyone informed and safe. Prison staff is learning to look at the prisoners coming in to intake as people with many mental health issues. Safety for all.

I am a survivor. Changes are happening in Joe’s name. It feels wonderful to make changes. I am not finished.

Submitted by Connie Cuddemi

WMUR Suicide Prevention PSAs Feature Local Survivors

In a collaborative effort with the Communications Committee of the NH Suicide Prevention Council, WMUR Channel 9 developed and aired two suicide prevention Public Service Announcements (PSAs) last fall. One of the PSAs featured NH survivors Wayne and

Marie Gagnon speaking about the death of their son, Joe, and encouraging help seeking and recognizing warning signs.

To view the PSAs on the web, please go to <http://www.naminh.org/SuicidePreventionPSAs.php>.

Survivors Provide Testimony to Support SB 390 and SB 359

Two bills that will have significant positive impact on suicide prevention efforts in New Hampshire were recently signed into law by Governor Lynch. SB 390, sponsored by Senator Kathleen Sgambati, will legislatively establish a state Suicide Prevention Council. With moving testimony from

Representative Roger Wells and others, SB 390 passed both the House and Senate, and was signed by the governor on June 26. SB 359, relative to health curriculum for schools, has been amended (thanks to Rep. Wells) to require schools to include suicide prevention as part of their health education for high school students. SB 359 was signed by the governor on June 24.

NH National Guard adopts funeral policy for suicide deaths

Kenneth Clark, the NH National Guard Adjutant General, recently adopted a policy which will insure that soldiers and veterans who die by suicide will receive military funeral honors. The policy clarifies existing military policies to insure that military funeral honors are “given based

out of respect for the service rendered, not out of the nature of the soldier or airman’s death.”

The policy adoption followed a briefing paper developed by Chaplain (LTC) Wayne Santos of the NH National Guard with technical assistance provided by Ken Norton, Director of NAMI NH’s Frameworks Suicide Prevention Project. The paper also detailed the

importance of providing appropriate supports to family and colleagues following a suicide death (postvention).

The briefing paper was circulated across the country among chaplains and others working in suicide prevention roles for the National Guard and, as a result of the positive response which the briefing paper received, Chaplain Santos and Ken Norton were

asked to do a brief presentation on suicide and Military Funeral Honors and Postvention at the Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Conference in San Diego. The Frameworks Project is continuing to work with the NH National guard to develop its suicide prevention and postvention efforts.

Resources for Survivors of Suicide

New Hampshire Survivors of Suicide Support Groups

Town/Location	Group Name	Times/Format	NH Contact Information
Concord NH Hospital Association	Concord Area SOS Group	2nd Thursday of month 6:30-8:30 pm Peer facilitated	Sue Hill 435-5365 suehillnh@hotmail.com Lisa MacNaughton 736-8604 (evenings and weekends) lisamac@metrocast.net
Exeter Seacoast Hospice	Healing after Suicide for Children and Families	Adult: 6-week closed groups 2 times/year Children: 10-week, spring and fall Peer facilitated	Elaine Wiesman 778-7391 1-800-416-9207 ewiesman@seacoasthospice.org
Gorham Family Resource Center	North Country SOS Support Group	2nd Thursday of month 7:00-9:00 pm Peer facilitated	Diane Bunnell 752-5984 (evenings or leave message)
Hampstead	Coping with a Loved One's Suicide	Varies	Dan Wells 329-5276 Dwells5@comcast.net http://nhcopingwithsuicide.com
Keene The Samaritans, Inc.	Safe Place Suicide Support Group	8-week closed groups, spring and fall; "Surviving the holidays" support group meets the weekend before Thanksgiving through the first week after January 1.	The Samaritans, Inc. 357-5510 www.samaritansnh.org
Lebanon Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center	Upper Valley SOS Support Group	2nd and 4th Thursday of month 4:30 pm Peer facilitated	1-800-639-6095 (toll-free, 24/7) uvsos@valley.net
Greater Nashua Area Merrimack Home Health and Hospice	The Greater Nashua Area Grieving Survivors of Suicide	1st Wednesday of month 6:30-8:00 pm Peer facilitated	320-0472 Leave message for call back
North Conway	SOS Bereavement Group	Varies	Rev. Anne Roser 356-7827
Plymouth Speare Memorial Hospital	Plymouth Region SOSL	2nd Tuesday of month 7:00-9:00 pm Peer facilitated	Marcia VanderMast 764-4352 (evenings or leave message) Sue Brothers 481-0502
Nationwide	Friends for Survival	Telephone Support	1-800-646-7322 Leave message for call back

***If you are interested in starting a SOS support group in your area or would like more information about existing groups, please contact Becky McEnany at 225-5359, or by email at bmccenany@naminh.org*

Internet Resources for Survivors

National Alliance on Mental Illness—New Hampshire	www.naminh.org	Click on <i>suicide prevention</i> , then <i>survivors</i>
American Foundation for the Prevention of Suicide (AFSP)	www.afsp.org	Click on <i>surviving suicide loss</i> for general info and on-line support
American Association of Suicidology (AAS)	www.suicidology.org	Click on <i>survivors</i>
GriefNet—an online support group	www.griefnet.org	Click on <i>adult support groups</i> , then <i>unique losses</i>
Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network (SPAN)	www.spanusa.org	Click on <i>survivor support</i> or <i>suicide prevention & survivor resources</i>
SAVE—Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education	www.save.org	Click on <i>coping with loss</i>
Suicide Prevention Resource Network	www.sprc.org	
Before Their Time <i>Music written/performed in memory of those who died young</i>	www.beforetheirtime.org	All sales benefit New Hampshire suicide prevention efforts

Emergency Numbers

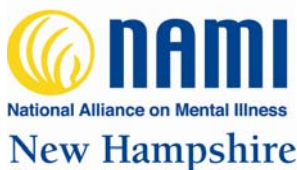
For all urgent situations, call 911 or go to your local emergency room

New Hampshire Hotlines:	National Hotlines:
The Samaritans, Inc. 24-hour Hotlines: 603-357-5505, 603-924-7000, 1-877-583-8336 (NH toll-free 24-hour hotline)	National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Headrest Teenline: 1-800-639-6095 (24-hour line)	Friends for Survival: 1-800-646-7322 (9 am-7pm PST, Noon-10 pm EST)

Do you want to get involved but don't know where to begin? Here are some ideas:

1. Attend an event (Walks, AFSP teleconference, YSPA conference)
2. Join the NH Survivor email list
3. Participate in the Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly (YSPA)
4. Contribute to this newsletter
5. Exhibit or transport the Lifekeeper Quilt
6. Join the monthly survivor conference call
7. Join the NAMI Survivor Walk Team
8. Attend a support group or start your own
9. Let us know about stories on suicide in your local papers
10. Join the AFSP Survivor Outreach Program
11. Join the NH Survivors Speaker Bureau
12. Apply for CHH funds to start a new survivor resource

To get involved, please contact Becky McEnany at 225-5359, or by email at bmccenany@naminh.org.



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Concord, NH 03301
603-225-5359
1-800-242-6264
www.naminh.org

Upcoming Survivor Events

West Central to Host Second Annual Firepower

On Saturday and Sunday, **August 23 and 24**, West Central Behavioral Health will host its 6th annual Paddlepower—a fundraising, awareness-raising event designed to help prevent the tragedy of suicide. This year's event will also feature the second annual Firepower, a 30-hour quiet memorial and tribute to those who have died by suicide. The Lifekeeper Quilt will be displayed at Firepower again this year. For complete details, please visit the Paddlepower website at <http://www.paddlepower.org>.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Hosts NH Out of the Darkness Walks

AFSP will host an Out of the Darkness Walk for suicide prevention in Portsmouth on Saturday, **September 27** at 10:00 am. The walk begins at Pierce Island and will cover 2.5 miles. A second Out of the Darkness walk will be held in Hanover, hosted by Dartmouth College, on Sunday, **November 2**. All proceeds will benefit AFSP's suicide prevention efforts. Complete details and registration information are available online at www.outofthedarkness.org.

NAMI Survivor Team Raises Awareness and Funds for NH Suicide Prevention and Mental Illness Efforts

Join us as we walk together again this year to raise awareness and funding. Please go to www.nami.org/namiwalks08/NHP/BeckyMcEnany and join our Survivor walk team (SOS Team), or to contribute. Everyone is welcome! The walk takes place on Sunday, **October 5** on the grounds of New Hampshire Hospital in Concord. Check-in begins at 9:30 am.

2008 Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly (YSPA) Conference Planning Underway

Save the date! The YSPA Annual Conference will return to the Waterville Valley Conference Center on Friday, **November 14**. YSPA's Education Committee has been diligently planning some great workshops, two of which will focus on survivors.

National Survivors of Suicide Day AFSP Teleconference

Saturday, **November 22** marks the 10th annual AFSP Survivors of Suicide Teleconference. With generous financial assistance from both the Hanover and Seacoast AFSP Out of the Darkness Walks, New Hampshire will be home to seven teleconference sites, which will be announced as the date draws closer. This is a time for anyone affected by suicide to gather for support, to watch the national teleconference with others who understand, and to share as much or as little as desired. To register, or for more information, please contact Becky McEnany at 225-5359, or by email at bmccenany@naminh.org. You may also watch the webcast online from your home computer; register by going to www.afsp.org.

2008 NH SOS Community Calendar

Please see articles for complete details

8/23: Paddlepower, Connecticut River

8/24: Firepower, Hanover

9/03: Greater Nashua Area GSOS first meeting, Merrimack

9/27: AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk, Portsmouth

10/5: NAMI NH Walk, Concord

11/2: AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk, Hanover

11/14: YSPA Conference, Waterville Valley

11/22: AFSP National Survivors of Suicide Day Teleconference, statewide

The New Hampshire Suicide Survivors Network is a coalition of suicide survivors, joined by some mental health professionals, that is helping to publicize local and national resources that provide support to survivors of suicide (SOS). The survivor network is focused on helping each other with the unique, profound, lingering grief that suicide subjects us to, and which those who have not experienced death by suicide cannot understand.

New Survivor Resources

AFSP Launches Survivor Outreach Program in NH

Last year, NH residents Marie and Wayne Gagnon, were among the first group of survivors to be trained by AFSP to provide outreach to newly bereaved survivors. This past March, eight additional NH survivors took part in the training and will join the Gagnons in expanding AFSP's capacity in NH to provide peer support to newly bereaved survivors. AFSP's Survivor Outreach Program is designed to help those who have recently lost a loved one to suicide by connecting them to local survivors who can provide shared understanding and support. A new survivor can access the program by contacting AFSP at 1-800-979-AFSP.



Catherine Greenleaf to Produce CD to Promote Healing

NH resident Catherine Greenleaf, author of [Healing the Hurt Spirit-Daily](#)

[Affirmations for People who have Lost a Loved One to Suicide](#), is producing a CD of meditations and music. For details, please visit Catherine's website at <http://www.healingthehurtspirit.com>.

NH Funeral Directors Provided Resources for Suicide Survivors

Funeral directors are in a unique position to be able to reach out to survivors early in their grief and help connect them to support. Following a suggestion made at a Frameworks Training for Funeral Directors at their Annual Meeting, resource folders for family members who have lost a loved one to suicide have now been provided to all funeral directors in NH. The folders contain information on grief, how to help children grieve, financial planning, survivor outreach, support groups, bibliography and a free copy of the CD *Before Their Time*. Contents of the survivor packet may be downloaded at the NAMI NH website at www.naminh.org. Click on "Suicide Prevention," and then click on "Survivors."

Greater Nashua Area Grieving Survivors of Suicide Support Group to Host First Meeting in September

Over the past several years, three NH survivors (Diane Bunnell, Marcia VanderMast, and Sue Brothers) have completed the Support Group Facilitator Training offered through

AFSP, and have started survivor support groups in their own communities. Maureen Sloan and Diane McEntee have completed the training and will join Marie Gagnon in starting a new Survivor Support Group in Nashua in Fall 2008. For more information about this group, please call 603-320-0472. All of the NH survivors completing the 2008 trainings were generously supported by funds raised by the Seacoast Chapter of AFSP at its fall Out of the Darkness Walk.

New Website for Survivors in NH

Members of the Hampstead Survivor of Suicide support group have launched a new website. The site was developed by Heather Wells, a Stonehill College student and the daughter of Dr. Roger Wells, a member of the NH House of Representatives. Roger co-leads the group with his son Dan and they meet every Friday from 4-5pm at the Hampstead library. Roger and Dan have led the support group for over 15 years, making it one of NH's longest running groups. They have also been involved in leadership roles with the AFSP. For more information or to view the website go to: <http://nhcopingwithsuicide.com>.

Community Health and Healing (CHH) Funds Available

The Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly (YSPA) and NAMI NH's Frameworks/Garrett Lee Smith project oversee the Community Health and Healing (CHH) Fund to provide supports to survivors and communities following a suicide death. Requests for funds are typically responded to within 48-72 hours. To find out more about the fund or to get an application go to the following link: <http://naminh.org/documents/chhform.pdf>.

New Monthly Survivor Committee Conference Calls

For the past several months, interested survivors have been meeting by conference call to discuss and offer help on survivor-related advocacy and support efforts around the state. This is a great opportunity to connect with other NH survivors about activities, find out what is happening, volunteer to help, and request help on starting something for survivors in your own community. If you would like to join the call, sign up for the survivor email list and you will be notified of the times, or contact Becky at bmcenany@naminh.org.

The following resources are available on loan through the Family Resource Connection at NH State Library:

Men Get Depression

A community outreach DVD profiling men ages 18-30, 30-55, and 55+ from the Men Get Depression national awareness campaign. (2008)

What a Difference a Friend Makes

PSAs for television, radio, and print for the Mental Health National Anti-Stigma campaign. (2007-2008)

The Truth about Suicide

AFSP has developed the 27-minute film *The Truth about Suicide: Real Stories of Depression in College* as an outgrowth of its commitment to support colleges and universities in implementing suicide prevention as an integral part of its ongoing campus activities and services.

A Fierce Goodbye

Hosted by folksinger Judy Collins, the DVD features family survivors of suicide who share personal stories of their trauma.

A Life Saved

This 10-minute video tells the true story of a suicide intervention performed by three boys who had just completed a suicide prevention unit called "Lifelines - A School-Based Response to Youth Suicide."

There Ought to be a Law

Cathy Crowley worked two full-time jobs and devoted all of her free time to her family before her teenage son Larry's death by suicide. *There Ought to Be A Law* shows Cathy's

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Resources

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inspiring transformation from a shy 'average Mom' to a savvy activist who takes on one of the most powerful and feared lobbying groups in the country.

AFSP Facilitating Suicide Bereavement Support Groups: A Self-Study Manual and DVD

Based on AFSP's highly-regarded support group facilitator training program, this self-study package covers the how-to's of starting and running a survivor support group, and is ideal for both those who are thinking of starting a new group, and for experienced facilitators looking to increase their knowledge and skill.

Real Men Real Depression

An estimated six million men in the United States have a depressive disorder every year. Although these illnesses are highly treatable, many men do not recognize, acknowledge, or seek help for their depression. These are PSAs for television, radio, and print about Men and Depression, produced by NIMH.

AFSP Teleconference 2007

DVD of the 9th Annual AFSP National Survivors of Suicide Teleconference.

To borrow these resources, or other materials related to survivors and suicide prevention, please contact the Family Resource Center (FRC) at the NH State Library at 1-800-298-4321, or by email at FRC@library.state.nh.us.



New Hampshire

Survivor Contributions

A Mother's Day Story

Mother's and Father's Days following child loss can become dreaded events. Stores and are filled with flowers, candies, balloons, and colorful decorations to serve as reminders of the coming holiday event. But when you have lost a child, a day that used to bring joy can bring pain, confusion, and awkwardness...Why do I not feel included in this day? Am I not still a mother or a father even if I have lost my child to an early death? Of course!

A survivor shares her powerful story of this year's Mother's Day:

I received a floral delivery e-greeting from my sister, Nancy, today. The last time I recall having a Mother's Day greeting from her was the year Joanna died. I was so touched by it that I sent it around to all the mothers in my address book. Sunday when I went to church, I greeted my good friend with, "Happy Mother's Day." She said, "Thank you," but didn't return it to me. It occurred to me that she didn't know what to say to me, because of Joanna's death - just as my sister might have been afraid to send me a greeting for fear of hurting me.

At the time in our service when we light candles of joy and concern, I lit a candle and told the story of my sister's last Mother's Day greeting, Joanna's death by suicide shortly thereafter, and this year's greeting from my sister, ending with, "Even though my child has died, my experience of being her mother still sustains me, and is a significant part of who I am. So, if any of you feel moved to wish me a Happy Mother's Day, it's okay...I would love it." Well! I lost count of all the good wishes and hugs that I received.

Later in the day my sister, Nancy called and I was able to share with her the significance of her greeting. It was a very healing day.

~Marcia VanderMast, NH Survivor

The Choice

Being alive and truly living
Are different things, you see.
One is only steady breathing,
The other, being all I can be.

Now I have a choice, you know.
To be or not to be.
Be just alive, or truly live...
What is the choice for me?

Tomorrow

My child is gone!
My world is black.
What do I do
To get back on track?

Sadness, regrets,
A gaping hole.
Where are the good feelings
That were in my soul?

I seem to have lost them,
They seem to have died.
Along with my loved one,
Oh, the tears I have cried!

Tears for me?
Or tears for him?
I cannot distinguish
Amidst the clamor and din.

My mind seems so crazy,
My heart so forlorn.
Memories so real
My emotions are torn.

Lean into your pain!
The experts do say.
Lean into MY PAIN?
I don't want to today!

Lean into my pain.
I know that I should.
Lean into my pain,
I would if I could.

Maybe tomorrow,
My soul will be stronger.
And the dark gaping hole
Will be with me no longer.

But today IS tomorrow!
From yesterday's view.
So NOW is the moment
To begin and renew.

~Marie Gagnon, NH Survivor