



FALL 2005

NETWORK NEWS

SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION NETWORK USA

Opening Minds. Changing Policy. Saving Lives.

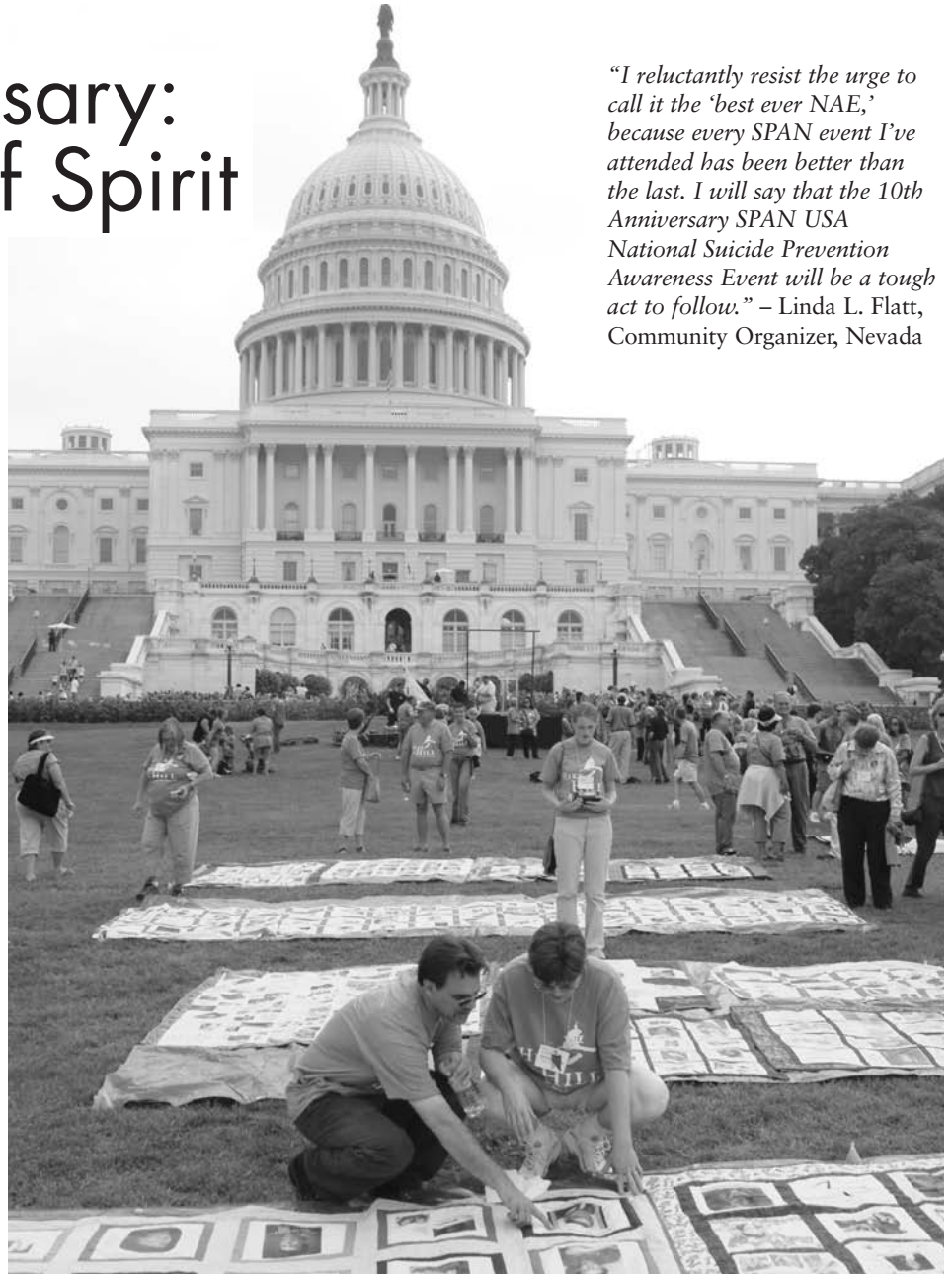
10th Anniversary: A Renewal of Spirit

Suicide prevention advocates from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C., for SPAN USA's National Awareness Event (NAE), Sept. 8-10, 2005. During three busy days, the group strengthened their advocacy toolbox, marched on Capitol Hill, reflected on SPAN USA's successful journey to date and charted a course for future work. "This 10th anniversary was a renewal of our spirit and commitment to this effort," said SPAN USA organizers Vanessa and Larry Lewis from Michigan.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) administrator Charles Curie, MA, ACSW, addressed the group and spoke about SAMHSA's suicide prevention initiatives. He also chose the NAE as the venue to announce the release of a new SAMHSA report on youth suicide. The eye-opening report showed that approximately 900,000 youth had made a suicide plan during their worst or most recent episode of major depression, and 712,000 attempted suicide during such an episode of depression. The full report "Suicidal Thoughts Among Youths Aged 12 to 17 with Major Depressive Episode" is available at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov>.

A centerpiece of every NAE is the

GO TO PAGE 3



SPAN USA board members Franklin Cook and Sandy Martin view the Lifekeeper Quilts after the Hike to the Hill during the 10th National Awareness Event.

"I reluctantly resist the urge to call it the 'best ever NAE,' because every SPAN event I've attended has been better than the last. I will say that the 10th Anniversary SPAN USA National Suicide Prevention Awareness Event will be a tough act to follow." – Linda L. Flatt, Community Organizer, Nevada

3 Hurricane Aftermath

5 SPAN USA Award Winners

6 Mental Health Action Agenda Announced

SPAN USA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Ballard, *Great Falls, Va.*
Franklin Cook (Secretary),
Rapid City, S.D.
Jeff Connaughton, *Washington, D.C.*
Sean Gerow (Chairman),
Middletown, N.Y.
Arana Greenberg (Treasurer),
San Clemente, Calif.
Sean Joe, *Ann Arbor, Mich.*
Maury Lieberman, *Washington, D.C.*
John Mack, *Oakland, Calif.*
Sandra Martin, *Tucker, Ga.*
Seamus McCarthy, *Tucson, Ariz.*
Waltraud Prechter, *Trenton, Mich.*
Jerry Reed (Ex-Officio),
Lake Ridge, Va.
Patrick Sanchez, *Berthoud, Colo.*
Janet Schnell, *Huntingburg, Ind.*
Sharon Smith, *Pendleton, Ore.*
Damon Thompson, *Washington, D.C.*
Madge Tullis, *Memphis, Tenn.*
Kay Tuttle, *North Bethesda, Md.*
Jerry & Elsie Weyrauch (Ex Officio)
Founders, *Marietta, Ga.*
Kurt Weyrauch, *New York, N.Y.*

HONORARY ADVISORS

Sen. Harry Reid, *Searchlight, Nev.*
Dr. David Satcher, *Atlanta, Ga.*

STAFF

Jerry Reed
Executive Director
jreed@spanusa.org
Lidia Bernik
Program Coordinator
lbernik@spanusa.org
Karin Schild
Administrative Assistant
kschild@spanusa.org
Melinda Moore
Project Manager
mmoore@spanusa.org

SPAN USA, Inc.
1025 Vermont Ave. NW,
Suite 1066
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 449-3600
(202) 449-3601, fax
www.spanusa.org

SPAN USA's *Network News* is funded
by a grant from the Eli Lilly and
Company Foundation.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Our 10th National Awareness Event is behind us, and we must now turn our attention to the future. As we celebrate our journey and the many achievements along the way, it is crucial that we continue to expand and develop our grassroots network.

The success of any public policy effort depends upon the strength of numbers. Therefore, I ask each of you to support the SPAN USA "Plus One" initiative to double our membership by bringing in one new member. I encourage you to reach out to friends, family, colleagues, neighbors and others who support suicide prevention, and invite them to become a member of SPAN USA. Share this newsletter with them, and ask them to send in the membership application. The larger our base of support, the more decision-makers will hear our message.

The power of our voice is evident in the \$9.7 million awarded recently to multiple grantees for suicide prevention. This is a huge step forward for suicide prevention, and all of you should be proud of your individual role in making this happen. Without a doubt, we do make a difference!

So, let me say to all of you, thanks for your past efforts, celebrate the moment and let us shape our future by joining together to support "Plus One" to double the strength of our voice and broaden our base of grassroots support. ■



COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Ideas, strategies, and resources from SPAN USA program coordinator Lidia Bernik

In 2003, we added the Legislative Action Center (LAC) to our Web site. This versatile tool, which allows you to communicate quickly and easily with your federal legislators, has been well-received. Since January 2004, advocates have used the LAC to send 7,300 messages to elected officials.

We have since expanded the LAC so you can now find out about state legislation and correspond with your state legislators. With many state legislatures coming back into session in January, the LAC is a great resource for your state and national advocacy efforts. If you're working on youth suicide prevention legislation, easily find out what other states are doing in that area. If you'd like to mobilize a grassroots campaign, use the LAC as a central information point and easy way for your network to reach legislators in your state.

Please keep me abreast of suicide prevention legislation introduced in your state. We do our best to stay informed of state and federal legislation, but can always use help. Contact me at lbernik@spanusa.org or (202) 449-3600 with updates. I look forward to working with you to advance suicide prevention at the federal and state levels. ■



Federal employees are invited to support SPAN USA by donating to the nonprofit through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). This is SPAN USA's first year in the campaign, which runs through

December 15. Designate SPAN USA (#1080) to make a donation that helps the leading grassroots suicide prevention organization raise awareness and advance public policies to help prevent suicides.



Anniversary FROM PAGE 1

day on Capitol Hill. This year advocates flocked to congressional offices, educated members and staff about SPAN USA's mission and public policy priorities and delivered 535 information packets. SPAN USA staff also handed over 2500 electronic petitions calling for mental health parity, implementation of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and full funding of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act.

Training sessions on advocacy, media relations and the resources of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) followed the next day. "The general conference really equipped us with user-friendly information to take back," said SPAN USA organizer Anne Tyson. "I can truly say that these were the most fruitful visits by far that I have made to the Hill." Alaska's Laura Henspeter said, "I gained so much from this experience to bring back to Alaska and am excited about raising awareness back here and increasing our prevention efforts."



During the Hike to the Hill, Jerry Reed thanks Sen. Gordon Smith and Sharon Smith for their fearless advocacy.

During an evening reception, participants celebrated the NAE's 10-year history. SPAN USA recognized key individuals in the suicide prevention movement (see p. 5 box). Advocates re-lived the SPAN USA journey while watching "The Faces of SPAN USA," a slideshow put together by Maury Lieberman, outgoing chairman, and Leslie Scallet, National Advisory Council member, as an expression of "appreciation and love." A candle-lit anniversary cake topped off the celebration.

The final day of the event saw the inauguration of SPAN USA's Hike to the Hill. The Sept. 10 date was significant as it was World Suicide Prevention Day, and, after a proclamation read by a representative for D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams, became SPAN USA Day in the nation's capital. Advocates hiked to Capitol Hill led by Jeff and Beth Alt, the couple who walked the Sierra Nevada Mountains during the Hike for Mike, honoring Beth's brother who died by suicide. Sen. Gordon Smith (R.-Ore.) and Sharon Smith, SPAN USA Board member, walked along and paid tribute to their son Garrett. During his remarks on the Capitol lawn, Sen. Smith said, "Mental illness – depression – does not register as a Republican or a Democrat. It's a human affliction." He called for full funding of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act. The 10th NAE closed with a stirring song performed by Dianna Baitinger, Miss Connecticut 2005 and SPAN USA organizer, the chance to view the Lifekeeper Quilts on the Capitol lawn and final hugs good-bye – until next year's NAE. ■

SPARK AWARD WINNER

SPARK Award winner Jan Ulrich (middle) is joined by Barbara Kaminer and Jason Padgett, Mental Health Mental Retardation Program administrators for Kentucky. Ulrich is the first recipient of the SPARK (Suicide Prevention Advocacy Recognition – Kentucky) Award, which was presented at the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Conference.



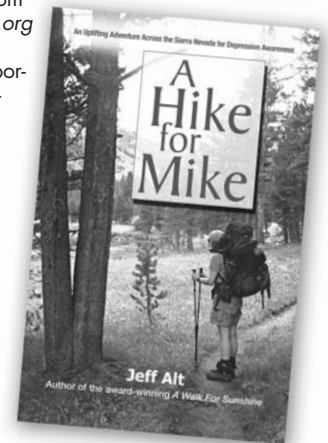
HURRICANE AFTERMATH

In the wake of the hurricanes that hit the Gulf Coast, SPAN USA urged Congress to take swift action to address the needs of hurricane victims and relief workers with or at risk for developing mental and emotional disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder. As part of the

Campaign for Mental Health Reform, SPAN USA and other national organization members recommended that Congress approve emergency appropriations for treatment and support services and extend emergency Medicaid coverage. In addition, SPAN USA board members made a donation to the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center, which

HIKE FOR MIKE

Order "Hike for Mike: An Uplifting Adventure Across the Sierra Nevada for Depression Awareness" from www.spanusa.org or your local bookstore. A portion of the proceeds benefit SPAN USA.



has been overwhelmed with calls from New Orleans and surrounding areas affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Visit SAMHSA's One-Stop Shop for Katrina and Rita Resources at www.samhsa.gov to learn more about the federal government's efforts to address the mental and emotional repercussions of these disasters.

New board members have recently joined the SPAN USA Board of Directors. Excited about the additions Executive Director Jerry Reed said, “Janet and John bring a wealth of talent and experience. Their contributions will energize an already outstanding board.”

JANET SCHNELL

Huntingburg, Ind.

Janet Schnell lost her brother Kent Schmitt to suicide in 1995. Realizing she needed to talk with others who understood the pain and stigma associated with losing a loved one dying to suicide, she sought out a support group for siblings. The closest one she found was in Louisville, Ky. – two hours away.



However, it was in Kentucky where she met SPAN USA founders Jerry and Elsie Weyrauch during one of their organizing visits. Schnell said, “Listening to Jerry made me believe that we have a

voice in our government to share who we are, what we’ve been through and how government can help.”

In 1997, she attended her first SPAN USA National Awareness Event. She said the Weyrauchs solicited her feedback about NAE, and she quickly felt ownership for the organization. “SPAN USA is about us as survivors and the memory of our loved ones who died by suicide,” she said.

Back in Indiana, Schnell, along with her sister and mother, began a local suicide survivors group. Today she serves as an advisory board member of the Indiana Suicide Prevention Coalition. She also is a master peer trainer for the Question Persuade Refer (QPR) intervention and helps educate school personnel about preventing suicide.

Schnell admits that she was a little worried when attending her first SPAN USA board meeting. As a survivor without a degree, she was concerned that professionals might look down upon her. She reports that the exact opposite experience took place. “I felt so welcomed, so valued. SPAN USA remembers that survivors and professionals work together on a common front.”

In addition to her advocacy and training work, Schnell is a wife, mother of a 15-year old son and student in pursuit of her bachelor of social work degree. A self-described outspoken person, Schnell looks forward to continuing SPAN USA’s exciting momentum.

JOHN MACK

Oakland, Calif.

Tapped on the shoulder by past chair Maury Lieberman to serve on the SPAN USA board, John Mack offers a fresh set of eyes to help guide the organization through its next stage of development. With a master’s degree in planning, extensive experience in the transportation industry and a solid understanding of the nonprofit community, Mack brings a multifaceted perspective to the SPAN USA board.



In his position as an executive manager for the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), the rail system serving the San Francisco Bay area, Mack has seen the ripple effects of suicide. He knows that train operators whose trains are inadvertently involved with a suicide often seek counseling after the traumatic event. Describing the SPAN USA mission as an outstanding cause, he decided to learn more about suicide prevention and make a difference.

Mack has worked with small businesses and nonprofits as a board member with the National Minority Supplier and Development Council, Bay Area chapter and as a development officer with the United Way of America. In these roles, he helped nonprofits with fundraising, team-building and strategic planning.

Mack said, “[SPAN USA] has done a tremendous job moving from grassroots development to ... being a national organization.” Mack says SPAN USA has a solid foundation upon which to build as the organization looks to strengthen its presence in Washington, D.C., and build an affiliate network. ■

Membership Opportunity Send a contribution today or become a SPAN USA Member to help America’s most effective grassroots suicide prevention organization continue its important work. For more information about SPAN USA membership, see www.spanusa.org. Mail to: SPAN USA, 1025 Vermont Ave. NW, Suite 1066, Washington, DC 20005

Become a SPAN USA Member:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY / STATE _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

My Contribution is...

IN HONOR OF _____

IN MEMORY OF _____

UNRESTRICTED _____

Membership

- \$25 Individual Membership
- \$15 Student or Senior Membership
- \$35 Family Membership
- \$150 Organizational Membership
- \$ _____ Additional Contribution

Payment

- Check enclosed
- Credit card Visa MC AmEx

NAME AS PRINTED ON CARD _____

CARD NUMBER _____

SIGNATURE _____ EXP. DATE _____

I would like a S M L XL SPAN USA Tshirt

SPAN USA Honors Suicide Prevention Leaders

At its 2005 National Awareness Event, SPAN USA honored local and national advocates for their leadership in promoting suicide prevention and awareness.

GRASSROOTS AWARDS

Heidi Bryan is a SPAN USA community organizer in Pennsylvania, where she works with her state legislature, local health organizations and schools to provide education and training on suicide prevention. Bryan is also the founder of the Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council, which is dedicated to decreasing the incidence of suicide in Southeastern Pennsylvania and supporting those affected by depression or the loss of a loved one to suicide.

Pam Harrington, a SPAN USA community organizer for several years and previous member of the SPAN USA Board of Directors, is active in suicide prevention in Florida. She founded the Beth Foundation and helped establish the Florida Suicide Prevention Task Force and the Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition. Enlisting the support of Gov. Jeb Bush, she has advocated for suicide prevention legislation in the Florida Legislature.

Diane Jones, a SPAN USA community organizer, has been involved in suicide prevention for 10 years. She first became active in Washington state, where she helped lead the Suicide Prevention Task Force and served on the Washington State Youth Suicide Prevention Program Board of Directors. She recently moved to Alaska, where she has once again become involved in state suicide prevention efforts.

Sandy Martin, who serves on the SPAN USA Board of Directors, developed the concept of the Lifekeeper Quilts in 1995 and launched the

Lifekeeper Foundation. These quilts, which are now in almost all 50 states, give a face to the tragedy of suicide and have provided a vital way for grassroots advocates across the nation to turn their grief into action by making quilts to raise awareness and honor their loved ones.

THE FOUNDERS AWARD

Sam and Lois Bloom have been instrumental in the suicide prevention field for the past 23 years. Active SPAN USA community organizers since 1996, the Blooms founded SPAN California in 1999. Over the years, they have facilitated survivor support groups, helped train crisis line volunteers and advocated for suicide prevention legislation at both the state and federal levels. Dedicated to raising awareness, they have a long history of engaging the media and providing information, resources and assistance to media reporting on suicide. The couple also has produced publications on surviving suicide and suicide prevention.

ALLIES FOR ACTION AWARD

Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.) has worked throughout his career to



Rep. Patrick Kennedy with his 2005 SPAN USA Allies for Action Award, which was presented by Sean Gerow, board chair; Maury Lieberman, past chair and current board member; and Jerry Reed.

decrease the negative stigma associated with mental illness that prevents millions of Americans from receiving treatment. In the 109th Congress, Kennedy sponsored a number of bills related to suicide prevention and mental health, including the Sen. Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act of 2005.

Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), has been a champion in the U.S. Senate on mental health issues and suicide prevention, particularly as a member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. DeWine was the principal sponsor of the PL 108-414, the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act, which promotes public safety by ensuring access to mental health and other treatment services for mentally ill adults and juveniles.

Virginia Trotter Betts, commissioner of mental health and developmental disabilities for Tennessee, serves on the SPAN USA National Advisory Council. Her commitment to suicide prevention dates back to her involvement with former Surgeon General David Satcher's initiatives on mental health, including the surgeon general's landmark report on suicide prevention, planning of the 1998 Reno Conference on suicide prevention and development of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

Dr. Lloyd Potter is the director of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the first federally funded suicide prevention resource center. Potter has managed development of the National Center for Suicide Prevention Training (NCSPT), worked on developing evaluation indicators for the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and evaluated implementation issues for community-based violence prevention programs. A leader in the effort to develop a National Suicide Prevention Conference in 1998, Potter co-authored the resulting report, "The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide." ■

FEDERAL ACTION AGENDA PRIORITIZES SUICIDE PREVENTION

In late July, SAMHSA administrator Charles Curie released the Federal Mental Health Action Agenda, a roadmap for implementing the vision set forth by the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health.

The Action Agenda maintains a federal spotlight on suicide prevention. One of the initial action steps is to launch the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, a public-private partnership that will oversee full implementation of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

"Establishing the Action Alliance is one of the key policy objectives contained in the National Strategy," said SPAN USA's Jerry Reed. "Putting an Action Alliance into place will lead to movement on so many of the National Strategy's important objectives." SPAN USA looks forward to being an integral part of the Alliance. To read the full Action Agenda, go to www.samhsa.gov/Federalactionagenda/NFC_TOC.aspx

GRANTS AWARDED WITH GARRETT LEE SMITH MEMORIAL ACT FUNDS

On Sept. 20, 2005, SAMHSA awarded 37 grants totaling \$9.7 million for suicide prevention activities authorized by the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act. The funds support the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, campus suicide prevention grants and state-sponsored youth suicide prevention and early intervention programs.

The campus suicide prevention grants will go to 22 institutions of higher education to enhance services for students with mental and behavioral health problems. Colleges and universities will receive up to \$75,000 annually for up to

three years. The state-sponsored youth suicide prevention and early intervention program will support development and implementation of statewide or tribal youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategies. Fourteen states were awarded youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategy grants: Arizona, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and the Native American Rehab Association of NW Inc. in Portland, Ore. For more information, see www.samhsa.gov/news/newsreleases/050920_grants.html.

ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM DATA

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has analyzed data submitted through the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), and the early data are instructive. Seventeen states participate in the surveillance system that collects detailed information about violent deaths (including suicide) from multiple sources. CDC published analysis of 2003 data from six states: Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, South Carolina and Virginia.

The system includes the mental health circumstances of people who die by suicide, according to medical examiner and police reports. The initial data revealed that close to 40 percent of those who died had a current depressed mood or mental health problem, while 22 percent had a history of mental illness.

To read CDC's analysis, see the April 22, 2005 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5415a1.htm. Advocates also can approach their state NVDRS advisory council to learn more specific information about their state data. ■



1025 Vermont Ave. NW
Suite 1066
Washington, DC 20005

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Washington, D.C.
Permit No. 68