



SUMMER 2006

NETWORK NEWS

SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION NETWORK USA

Opening Minds. Changing Policy. Saving Lives.®

Advocate Turns “Feeling Blue” into a Positive

Suicide has taken a significant toll on the life of Heidi Bryan. The 48-year-old Pennsylvania woman lost her brother, cousin, uncle, high school friend and college classmate to suicide. Bryan also has struggled with suicidal thoughts as she’s worked to manage her own depression. However, after the devastating loss of her brother in 1995, Bryan says, “I learned that suicide is no longer an option.”

Instead, Bryan chooses to use her painful experiences to help others. The soft-spoken woman talks openly about her personal struggles in the hope that her story will assist others who are hurting. In 1998, Bryan also formed a church-based suicide awareness outreach group with the support of her minister and fellow parish-

ioners at St. Martin’s Episcopal Church.

Initially, the well-intentioned committee wasn’t sure how – or where – to start. However, the outreach effort eventually found its stride. In 2003, Bryan and her team of dedicated volunteers created the Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council, a separate, non-profit organization. Feeling Blue provides suicide prevention training,

public seminars, consultations, as well as resource information, statistics and referrals. Bryan sits on her state’s suicide prevention task force and works closely with local county officials on train-

After her brother’s death, Heidi Bryan launched the Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council.

ing initiatives. Every month she gives talks at the local youth detention center and recently spoke about suicide prevention at several aging forums that took place across the state.

Bryan’s connection to SPAN USA began when she attended her first suicide prevention conference, a meeting put on by Jerry and Elsie Weyrauch, SPAN USA’s founders. “[The conference] just had a profound effect on me. I remember going back to the hotel room and telling my husband that I’m finally with other people who are like me. Jerry talked about the fire in our belly, the fire that drives most of us survivors. [That] was exactly how I felt.” Bryan’s association with SPAN USA remains strong, and the national organization recently recognized her contributions. In 2005, she was honored with the SPAN USA Grassroots Award for her local and statewide efforts to raise awareness in Pennsylvania.

Bryan is direct and down-to-earth as she discusses both her accomplishments and her personal challenges. As she tells her unvarnished story, she seems to invite listeners to let their own guard down. Her willingness to share her so-called “weaknesses” turns out to be a strength that is both beneficial and

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

July 1, 2006, marked the three-year anniversary of SPAN USA's new presence in Washington, D.C., and my tenure as executive director. How quickly the time has passed – and how much we have accomplished.

Since joining SPAN USA's family, I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with many fantastic and dedicated individuals from across the country, all of whom, in their own way, provide the fuel for our SPAN USA engine to run. I walk away from these encounters energized and encouraged that through our collective efforts we are making suicide prevention a reality.

SPAN USA's National Awareness Event (NAE) is a key time when many of these wonderful people gather in Washington, D.C. This annual event is an opportunity to reconnect, rededicate and rejuvenate our spirits to accomplish the important work of suicide prevention. It also provides us an opportunity to collectively remember those lost to suicide and to support those who struggle. If you have not yet registered for the 11th Annual NAE, Sept. 7-9, 2006, I encourage you to do so now.

I believe we are at a crucial point where we need a strong and united voice to ensure suicide prevention maintains national attention and receives the resources to provide programs, services, research and support. There are competing demands for limited resources. If we do not speak up, someone with a different passion will. As World Suicide Prevention Day and Suicide Prevention Week begin immediately following our event, our timing is right on. Thus our theme, *Suicide Prevention: Right Here, Right Now.*

I look forward to seeing all of you in September. Bring a friend, colleague or family member and help strengthen our voice! ■



COORDINATOR'S CORNER

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

As some of you know, I have been working for SPAN USA from Maplewood, N.J., since January. After living in D.C. for two years, I felt it was time to move back closer to my hometown, my family and my significant other.

Now there is another change to report: I am leaving SPAN USA to assume a new position in the suicide prevention field, one that is based in New York City. As of mid-September, I will be the network development coordinator for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The next few months will serve as a transition time, during which I'll work part time for both SPAN USA and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

I have enjoyed my work and deeply cherish my time at SPAN USA. I truly admire the energy and dedication embodied by so many of SPAN USA's organizers, supporters and advisors. I have learned a great deal from you. Although I will soon no longer be a staff member with SPAN USA, I will forever consider myself part of this wonderful family. Thank you for sharing your passion for suicide prevention with me, and keep up the amazing work.

I look forward to seeing you at the National Awareness Event in September and trust that our paths will cross again down the road. ■



SUICIDE PREVENTION: RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.

SPAN USA's 11th Annual National Awareness Event

Hear from internationally known psychologist and author Kay Redfield Jamison and pay a visit to your legislators on Capitol Hill during SPAN USA's 11th Annual National Awareness Event (NAE), Sept. 7-9, 2006.

Dr. Jamison speaks on Saturday, Sept. 9th, during the NAE's final event, traditionally a highlight for conference participants. Advocates gather at 10:00 a.m. at the World War II Memorial and walk in the Memorial March for Suicide Prevention. The morning event also includes the *Lifekeeper Memorial Quilt* display, live music by a local vocal ensemble, and remarks by WJLA/ABC7 reporter Rebecca Cooper.

The NAE continues to be *the* event where survivors have ready access to national lawmakers and the chance to speak in a united voice about suicide prevention. This year's conference features a briefing luncheon with Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.) cosponsored by the Jed Foundation, visits to Capitol Hill, training workshops and a healing memorial event.

SPAN USA appreciates the supporters of Saturday's Memorial March, including partners Active Minds, ACTS Helpline, Advancing Suicide Prevention magazine, American Association of Suicidology, CrisisLink, Downtown Cluster of Congregations, National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide and the Virginia Department of Health.

To register and view the action-packed agenda for *Suicide Prevention: Right Here, Right Now*, see www.spanusa.org.



Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D. to speak

SPAN USA Salutes its Conference Sponsors

On April 29, 2006, SPAN USA collaborated with the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) to host the 18th Annual Healing After Suicide Conference in Seattle, Wash. Titled "In the Spirit of Hope," the dynamic conference brought together 150 survivors and clinicians from across the country to learn how to better navigate the healing journey that occurs after suicide. This year's event was designed by and for survivors, and attendance increased by nearly 100 percent from the previous year. Heralded by many attendees as the best conference ever, one participant said, "I was humbled to be a part of such a beautiful event. It was one of the most rewarding conferences I've ever attended."

Lead conference sponsor Eli Lilly and Company and the two co-sponsors, Washington State Medical Association and the Children's Hospital & Regional Medical Center, provided generous assistance that made this event possible. SPAN USA is extremely grateful to corporate partners who sponsor these types of conferences. Their support is instrumental in raising awareness about suicide prevention and educating advocates through national and regional meetings. As SPAN USA seeks to broaden its educational reach, the nonprofit will continue to work with and salute its corporate conference sponsors.

There are several upcoming sponsorship opportunities for interested organizations, including:

- SPAN USA's 11th Annual National Awareness Event in Washington, DC, September 7-9, 2006
- 2007 AAS/SPAN USA Healing After Suicide Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, April 2007
- SPAN USA's 12th Annual National Awareness Event in Washington DC, July 19-21, 2007

Contact Lindsay Paulette-Chapman at 202-449-3600 to learn more. ■

AT ITS JUNE 2006 MEETING, THE SPAN USA BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVED THE FOLLOWING VISION FOR THE ORGANIZATION:

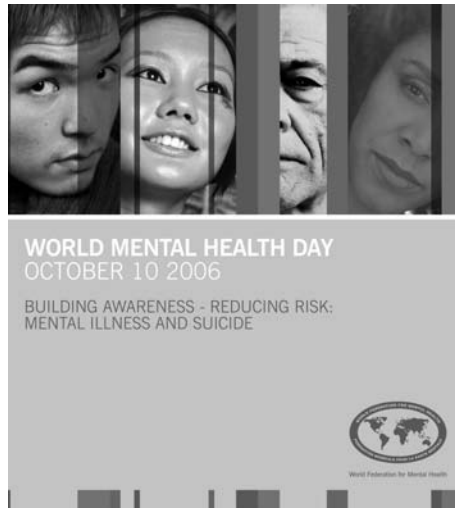
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA) envisions a world where suicide prevention is embraced as a public priority by all members of society, where people touched by suicide are supported and where communities link awareness with action in order to save lives.

World Focus on Suicide Prevention

Many SPAN USA advocates are aware of World Suicide Prevention Day, which takes place Sept. 10, 2006. Co-sponsored by the International Association for Suicide Prevention and the World Health Organization, the day often coincides with and is observed during SPAN USA's Annual National Awareness Event. Countries from around the world will host local suicide prevention activities that carry out this year's theme "With understanding, new hope."

Another annual mental health event also has a suicide prevention focus in 2006. World Mental Health Day takes place on Oct. 10 and features the theme, "Building Awareness – Reducing Risk: Mental Illness and Suicide." "There is lots of interest around the world in this particular topic," said Preston Garrison, Secretariat and CEO of the World Federation for Mental Health. "Suicide is a major part of the global health burden."

Since 1992, the World Federation for



Mental Health has sponsored World Mental Health Day to promote global education and awareness and address the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness. The federation produces campaign packets for countries to use in their own grassroots awareness programs; typically, the organization distributes 4,000 packets of materials to 150 countries each year.

To plan this year's campaign, the World Federation convened a 15-member international expert panel in March 2006. SPAN USA's Jerry Reed served on the panel, joined by representatives from India, South America, Africa and Europe. "Jerry's experience and background were a major contribution," Garrison said. "He shared many advocacy ideas, such as creating the necessary public and political will, building effective policy and conducting prevention, education and suicide risk reduction among people with mental illness."

SPAN USA, a member of both international organizations, is pleased to promote both events. In addition, the World Federation and the International Association for Suicide Prevention are collaborating to heighten awareness about the two days.

Learn more about World Mental Health Day and obtain a campaign packet by visiting www.wfmb.org. Information about World Suicide Prevention Day is available at www.iasp.info. ■

Wyoming Conference Builds Bridges

Almost 200 people gathered in Casper for Wyoming's statewide suicide prevention conference May 17–19, 2006. "Building Bridges to a Better Tomorrow" was designed for advocates, clinicians and other professionals (e.g., teachers, administrators and first responders). There were participants from throughout Wyoming and surrounding states, including Nebraska, Colorado and Montana.

The event was sponsored by the Wyoming Department of Health, Mental Health Division and the state of Wyoming's Suicide Prevention Task Force with the Department of Health's Keith Hotle chairing the conference committee. Hotle serves as the state's suicide prevention specialist, a position

created and funded in 2005.

Participants heard from Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal, Attorney General Patrick J. Crank and Joe Glenn, the well-liked head coach of the University of Wyoming football team. The full agenda featured workshops on many important topics, including youth suicide prevention, QPR prevention training, school crisis planning and preparation and suicide prevention through the lifecycle.

The conference also provided local advocates and clinicians with a bridge to the national level, and they heard national perspectives on the challenges of suicide prevention. Along with SPAN USA's Jerry Reed, other national speakers included Mark Weber, SAMHSA's Communications Director representing

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrator Charles Curie; David Litts with the Suicide Prevention Resource Center; and Lanny Berman from the American Association of Suicidology. "The presenters did a very good job with tying national initiatives to our state-level concerns," Hotle said.

Hotle anticipates Wyoming will host a similar statewide conference every few years and schedule meetings tailored to special populations during the interim period. Calling the conference "dynamic," he noted how the meeting helped to jumpstart the state's relatively new suicide prevention task force. "There was a high level of energy at the conference," he said. "People left ... ready to move forward." ■

SENATE APPROVES INDIAN YOUTH TELEMENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

Citing the high suicide rate among American Indians and Alaska Natives (2.5 times higher than the national average), the Senate unanimously approved the Indian Youth Telemental Health Demonstration Project Act of 2006 (S.2245) in May. The bill would fund demonstration projects that use electronic information and telecommunication technologies to support long distance mental health care and public health education for Indian youth at risk for suicide. After passing in the Senate, the legislation was referred to the relevant committees in the House of Representatives. Those House committees have not yet taken action on the bill.

To learn more, visit SPAN USA's Legislative Action Center at www.capwiz.com/spanusa.



PHOTO CREDIT: SENATE PHOTOGRAPHER

Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) receives SPAN USA's Allies for Action Award for his leadership role in raising awareness of suicide prevention as a public health priority. DeWine is a strong supporter of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (PL 108-355) and the principal sponsor of the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (PL 108-414).

SUICIDE PREVENTION GROUPS COLLABORATE

Without question, the sum is greater than its parts. That was the inescapable conclusion reached by leaders in the suicide prevention field when they decided to form the National Council for Suicide Prevention (NCSP) in 1999.

Coalition members (listed below) agreed to share information, coordinate strategies and work together to help raise awareness about the burden of suicide and promote its prevention. The coalition also works with colleagues from the public and private sectors to advance suicide prevention.

Whenever possible, the twelve organizations speak with one voice so policy makers and decision makers hear a unified and consistent message. Last summer SPAN USA organized visits to Capitol Hill, and NCSP members met with elected officials and their staffs. The national organizations joined forces to call for full funding of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act – a call that ultimately was heeded.

To learn more about this collaborative effort, visit www.ncsp.org ■

- American Association of Suicidology
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- The Jason Foundation
- The Jed Foundation
- Kristin Brooks Hope Center
- The Link Counseling Center's National Resource Center for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare
- National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide
- Organization for Attempters and Survivors of Suicide in Interfaith Services
- Samaritans, Inc.
- Suicide Awareness\Voices of Education
- Suicide Prevention Action Network USA
- Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention

NVDRS Sheds More Light on Suicide Deaths

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) recently reported on 2003 and 2004 data submitted by participating states. NVDRS, operated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, analyzes information collected from multiple sources (e.g., death certificates, police reports, coroner reports) to provide information on the circumstances surrounding violent deaths, including suicide.

Some of the suicide-related findings included:

- Nearly half of those who died by suicide had at least one documented mental health diagnosis; depression was the most frequent diagnosis (85%) among those people with a mental health diagnosis.
- Problems with a current or former intimate partner contributed to close to 28% of suicide deaths.
- About 19% of people who died by suicide had made previous attempts.

For more analysis, see the July 7, 2006 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/mmwr. ■

CAROL GRAHAM

Ft. Sam Houston, Tex.

Like many survivors, Carol Graham has a story of loss that causes people to swallow hard when they hear it.

In June 2003, her youngest son Kevin, a pre-med student and senior Army ROTC scholarship cadet at the University of Kentucky, died by suicide. Eight months later, Graham's older son Jeffrey, a U.S. Army lieutenant, was leading his platoon on patrol in Iraq. He spotted an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) taped to a guardrail and was able to warn his platoon before it exploded and killed him. Graham notes her sons "died fighting different battles."

Since the death of her sons, Graham has been waging her own campaign to raise awareness about depression and suicide prevention on college campuses. She and her husband Brigadier General Mark Graham, US Army, Deputy



Commanding General of US Army North established the Jeffrey C. and Kevin A. Graham Memorial Fund to provide the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) suicide prevention program at the University of Kentucky. The Grahams also helped launch the Jeffrey and Kevin Graham Memorial Endowed Lectureship in Psychology for the study of depression and suicide prevention at Cameron University in Lawton, Okla., where their surviving daughter Melanie attends college.

Initially after Kevin's death, Graham acknowledges that she was "just trying to keep my head above water" while the couple relocated to their new posting at Ft. Sill in Oklahoma. Eventually, she found herself seeking out other military families who were living through similar tragedies. "Being around other people who were hurting," she said, "reminded me we were not alone in our suffering." She began sharing her story, speaking at meetings and listening to other Ft. Sill families in an effort to raise awareness about depression and suicide prevention. In July 2005, Graham was awarded the Governor's

Commendation (State of Oklahoma) for Suicide Prevention and Depression Awareness in support of the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Program.

Being a SPAN USA board member now gives Graham a national platform to share her family's experience and "save someone else's child." She will attend SPAN USA's National Awareness Event in September, bringing along her mother and friends from her support group in Oklahoma. During her trip to Washington, Graham will hand-carry a newly sewn Memory Quilt, honoring loved ones lost to suicide. The quilt will include Kevin Graham's picture.

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR ADVOCATES

- *National Suicide Prevention Week*, Sept. 10-16, 2006. The weeklong remembrance is sponsored by the American Association of Suicidology. Information and media kit are available at www.suicidology.org.
- *Maryland's 18th Annual Suicide Prevention Conference*, Oct. 4, 2006. "Suicide: The Unseen Violence" will occur in Woodlawn, Md. Contact Henry Westray at westrayh@dhmh.state.md.us.
- *Arizona Suicide Prevention Conference*, Oct. 26-28, 2006. The first statewide conference on suicide prevention takes place in Ahwatukee, Ariz. See www.azspc.org.
- *Third Annual Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly Conference: Suicide Prevention Tools for the Lifespan*, Nov. 3, 2006. Speakers and workshops will address prevention policy issues, training and resources for both youth and the elderly. See the NAMI NH website at www.naminh.org.

Parents Asked for Help with Survey on Suicide Loss

Bill Feigelman, Ph.D., a professor at Nassau Community College in New York, is conducting a survey of parents who have lost children to suicide. Dr. Feigelman's son died by suicide four years ago, and he is interested in contributing to the research base on survivors' feelings and needs. Parents are asked to complete an anonymous and confidential survey. To volunteer or find out more, call Dr. Feigelman at (718) 380-8205 or feigelw@ncc.edu. ■

Into a Positive FROM PAGE 1

healing to others who are struggling.

For example, Bryan candidly acknowledges that, even after starting Feeling Blue, she had depressive episodes and suicidal thoughts. “A few years ago, I was sinking into another depression, and my meds weren’t working,” Bryan said. Feeling like a hypocrite, she confided in a friend that she doubted her ability to help anyone during such a low period. Her friend reassured Bryan, “The wounded heal the sick.”

Bryan said, “That’s when it really clicked in my head that it helps people to heal when they hear about my struggles.” That realization plus concern about the message she’d be sending (“How would it look?”) helped to prevent Bryan from acting on her suicidal feelings.

In 2004, Bryan left her full-time job to dedicate her time to Feeling Blue. Describing her work as a calling, she says, “I’m fortunate ... to have something that I know I’m supposed to be doing. Not many people get that.” When asked about her hopes for Feeling Blue’s future, she said, “A

dream is to have a center where people come to us for training.” In the meantime, she tries to “take it as it comes and hope for the best.”

Despite Feeling Blue’s success, Bryan remains unassuming. She gives a humble laugh as she recalls an exchange with her board members. After attending a national conference, Bryan shared the latest findings with her volunteer board. She then told them, “You should see the thousands of people working in this field. I’m not that special.”

The board’s response: “You’re special to us.” ■

Partner with SPAN USA

Partnership – it’s essential for advancing suicide prevention. The combined efforts of many are needed to create the changes that help save lives. Partnerships among businesses, nonprofits, government agencies and philanthropic organizations. Between survivors, advocates, health professionals and policy makers. The National Strategy for Suicide

Prevention, the nation’s blueprint for preventing suicide, recognized this need and called for greater partnership to accomplish its ambitious agenda.

But, you are the real power behind any partnership. You, the individual, who steps up and works with a partner so that your voices are heard — you make the *real* difference!

In fall 2006, SPAN USA launches its

first “Partners for Action” Campaign. The campaign seeks new individual and organizational partners who will help build the support needed to continue suicide prevention in America. Help us kick off the campaign! Send in the coupon below using the enclosed envelope and become a SPAN USA “Partner for Action.” ■

Join us as a Partner for Action...

Send a contribution today and help SPAN USA, America’s most effective grassroots suicide prevention organization, continue opening minds, changing policies, and saving lives. By supporting SPAN USA, you can be a part of the solution and join us as we confront suicide as a public health problem. For more information, go to www.spanusa.org.

Indicate any updates or changes to your information below:

YOUR NAME _____

ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

WANT TO BE MORE INVOLVED? CHECK BELOW!

- I want to join SPAN USA’s Action E-List
- I want more information about becoming a Community Organizer or Quilt Organizer
- I would like more information on SPAN USA and suicide prevention
- Other: _____

MY CONTRIBUTION IS:

- \$50
- \$200
- \$35
- \$ _____

PAYMENT:

- Check enclosed
- Credit card
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- In Memory of: _____
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New Tool for Public Awareness Campaigns

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) released “Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention,” a how-to guide for those designing public service announcements and educational activities for the general public.

The document uses a “Do’s and Don’ts” format to layout research-based recommendations to help shape the content of suicide prevention messages. In addition, SPRC’s Online Library contains resources that address the process of developing and disseminating the messages.



The Do’s

- Do emphasize prevention.
- Do highlight effective treatments for underlying mental health problems.

The Don’ts

- Do emphasize help-seeking and provide information on finding help.
- Do list the warning signs, as well as risk and protective factors of suicide.
- Don’t glorify or romanticize suicide or people who have died by suicide.
- Don’t normalize suicide by presenting it as a common event.
- Don’t present suicide as an inexplicable act or explain it as a result of stress only.
- Don’t focus on personal details of people who have died by suicide.
- Don’t present overly detailed descriptions of suicide victims or methods of suicide.

For more information (including the research citations that support the recommendations) see www.sprc.org/library/SafeMessagingfinal.pdf. ■



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