

March 13, 2007

Mr. Jon Feltheimer  
CEO and co-chairman  
Lions Gate Entertainment Corporation

Ms. Courtney Solomon  
Partner  
AfterDark Films

Dear Mr. Feltheimer and Ms. Solomon:

As the leaders of organizations dedicated to mental health and suicide prevention, we are writing to express our concerns about your companies' marketing plans for the suicide comedy *Wristcutters*, and in particular your focus on attracting young adults aged 17-30. We request that you drop your plans to launch the marketing campaign with graphic depictions of suicide.

We hope that your independent entertainment companies will consider the impact that *Wristcutters* and its aggressive marketing to young people could have on countless teenagers and young adults. We are especially troubled by the levity with which AfterDark Films refers to its intended marketing campaign featuring cardboard cutouts of characters jumping off a bridge, electrocuting and hanging themselves.

Our concerns about your planned marketing campaign are based on solid research and in media guidelines for the description of suicide developed in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School. We strongly urge you to review these guidelines before implementing your marketing strategy. To view the guidelines, visit: [http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/07\\_adolescent\\_risk/SUICIDE/Guidelines20050809.pdf](http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/07_adolescent_risk/SUICIDE/Guidelines20050809.pdf). There is scientific evidence that portrayals of suicide pose the very real danger of suicide contagion, the clinical term for copy cat suicides. Although the Lionsgate brand name is synonymous with original, daring and quality entertainment, there is nothing original or daring about the tragedy of suicide and it is inappropriate and irresponsible to consider the topic of suicide as entertainment.

More than 31,000 people die by suicide each year in the United States and approximately 1.4 million attempt suicide. Among young Americans, suicide is the third leading cause of death between the ages of 10 and 24 and the second leading cause of death for American college students. In fact, in the last year for which we have nationwide data (2004), the youth suicide rate increased 18 percent from the previous year. It is now estimated that every two hours and 15 minutes, a person under the age of 25 dies by suicide. As disturbing, one out of every 12 college students has made a suicide plan.

The cost of suicide is very real to our nation. Suicides cost the U.S. \$13 billion in lost earnings each year, and suicide attempts requiring hospitalization cost the United States \$3.8 billion per year. The emotional costs to countless families and communities are incalculable.

Suicide is a major public health concern and one where everyone needs to be engaged in its prevention. As you may be aware, recently General Motors (GM) and Volkswagen (VW) aired television commercials depicting suicidal ideation. After a public response from organizations such as ours, GM and VW agreed to edit their ads to eliminate the depiction of suicide. Our organizations applaud the willingness of these business leaders to listen to the concerns of the suicide prevention and mental health community and hopes that Lionsgate and Afterdark Films will take appropriate action in modifying its marketing campaign as well.

We hope to work with you to explore ways in which you can use your companies' brands to reduce stigma and encourage people at risk of suicide to seek help early. We would be more than happy to

meet with you to more fully understand the issue and explore partnership opportunities to prevent the tragic loss of life to suicide. The time has come when the impact of the entertainment industry must be taken seriously. Our groups urge you to pull the marketing campaign for %Wristcutters+as it trivializes a very significant public health issue and could lead to serious consequences involving suicide contagion.

To follow up regarding the letter and our request, please contact Jerry Reed, Executive Director, Suicide Prevention Action Network USA at 202-449-3600 or at [jreed@spanusa.org](mailto:jreed@spanusa.org). Mr. Reed will communicate your response to all concerned organizations. He would also be happy to set up a conference call at your convenience with the co-signors of the letter to discuss ways that we can work together.

Sincerely,

Alison K. Malmon  
Executive Director  
Active Minds, Inc.

Thomas F. Anders, M.D.  
President  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Alan L. Berman, Ph.D., ABPP  
Executive Director  
American Association of Suicidology

Robert Gebbia  
Executive Director  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

James H. Scully Jr., M.D.  
Medical Director and CEO  
American Psychiatric Association

Kelly Snider  
Chief Association Officer  
American Psychotherapy Association

E. Clarke Ross  
CEO  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

Julie Totten  
President and Founder  
Families for Depression Awareness

Donna Satow  
Co-founder  
The Jed Foundation

David Shern, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
Mental Health America (formerly known as the National Mental Health Association)

Michael J. Fitzpatrick, M.S.W.  
Executive Director  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

Donna Barnes  
President  
National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide, Inc

Alan Ross  
Executive Director  
Samaritans USA

Daniel J. Reidenberg, Psy.D.,  
Executive Director  
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

Jerry Reed, M.S.W.  
Executive Director  
Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA)

Dale and Dar Emme  
Executive and Deputy Directors/ Founders  
Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program