

Ray of Hope

WESTMORELAND COUNTY SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION TASK FORCE

Our mission is to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and suicide and to increase awareness that suicide is a national public health problem for individual across a lifespan.

2021 RAY OF HOPE SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION CONFERENCE HOPE AND RESILIENCE DURING CHANGING TIMES



On Friday, November 19, 2021, the Ray of Hope Task Force hosted their biennial conference at the Westmoreland County Community College. The theme for this year's conference was **Hope and Resilience During Changing Times**. For more details and photos from this year's event, please visit the next few pages.



WHAT WE DO

- Offer presentations on suicide awareness and prevention, including QPR Training (Question, Persuade, Refer)
- Hold the Ray of Hope Annual Walk
- Host a biennial conference and educational seminars
- Support the L.O.S.S. Support Group (Loved Ones Stolen by Suicide)
- Hold quarterly Task Force meetings

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2021 RAY OF HOPE CONFERENCE CONT.

The conference kicked off with a keynote address by award winning author & TED Talks speaker, **Anne Moss Rogers**. Anne Moss shared her lived experience with losing her son to suicide and addiction and how she found hope again after her tragic loss. Her blog, EmotionallyNaked.com, has reached millions and she co-authored a book with Kim O'Brien Ph.D., LICSW called *Emotionally Naked: A Teacher's Guide to Preventing Suicide and Recognizing Students at Risk.* Some of the healthy coping strategies that people have shared with her include deep breathing, bee keeping, writing, rock climbing, and cold showers.

Dr. John McCarthy presented Hope and Resilience in Changing Times. He asked the audience, "Where does your hope live?" In your heart, in your mind, in your spirituality? His point was that we all have hope and we hold it in different ways. His other questions required us to reflect on our thoughts about hope and how it impacts our interactions with other people.

Dr. Charma Dudley spoke about suicides in the minority populations. Not only did Dr. Dudley share numerous statistics with the audience, but also she shared the Zero Suicide Principles that included LEAD, TRAIN, IDENTIFY, and ENGAGE. The goal is to "ensure every person has a pathway to care that is both timely and adequate to meet his or her needs."

The Coordinator Spotlight highlighted Ray of Hope Coordinator, **Rachel Cunningham**, who spoke about the loss of her husband to suicide and how she and her two small children navigated the difficult road of grief. Rachel's story provided hope that suicide loss survivors can live a fulfilling life after experiencing a tragedy.

The afternoon featured an attempt survivors panel moderated by **Dr. Sam Lonich** and included speakers **John, Nicole, Ursula, and Vic**. Each speaker did an excellent job sharing their stories and journey toward healing. Advice they had to share with the audience included finding support, locating resources, and asking someone how they are doing. Ursula said that when things are not going well, she tells loved ones to "love me a little extra today." Ursula also recommended that we be a voice for someone who doesn't have one. Powerful words!

The day closed with a fun and festive rendition of Family Feud hosted by **David Delvaux**, Clinical Liaison, Clarion Psychiatric Center! Two teams did an awesome job guessing the answers to holiday trivia questions and there was a lot of laughter, which was a wonderful way to conclude the conference.

























Turning Pain into Purpose with Anne Moss Rogers















Western Region Community Support Program



























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beacon

l can't heal if l can't feel



ZERO SUICIDE PRINCIPLES

1. LEAD - Create a leadership-driven, safety-oriented culture committed to dramatically reducing suicide among people under care.

2. TRAIN - Develop a competent, confident, and caring workforce.

3. IDENTIFY - Identify and assess suicide risk among people receiving care through

screening tools.

4. ENGAGE - Ensure every person has a pathway to care, that is both timely and adequate to meet his or her needs. Include collaborative safety planning and restriction of lethal means.



Expectancy effect (Tambling, 2012)

"the process by which expectations beccont f-fulfilling prophecies" (p. 402)

This effect: a powerful outcome pre

*Related to hope



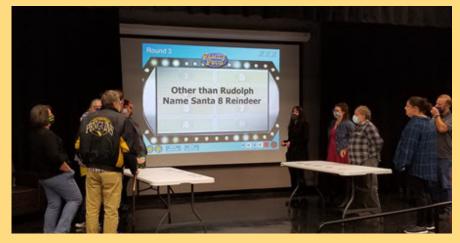




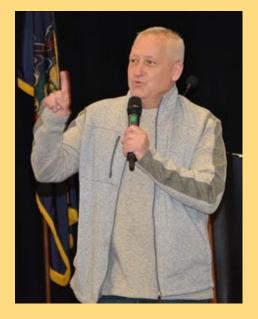












TASK FORCE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



RACHEL CUNNINGHAM

TASK FORCE COORDINATOR & MHA-SWPA DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Q: How long have you been a part of the Ray of Hope Task Force? A: I joined the task force in 2018 when I came to the MHA-SWPA as the Director of Development and soon after became the Coordinator of the Ray of Hope.

Q: Why did you decide to join the Task Force?

A: In 2016, I lost my husband to suicide. This was such a shocking event for me because I never thought it could happen to me or my family. In fact, it was something that was never even on my radar.

I have dealt with so many different emotions and different struggles over these past (almost) six years that suicide prevention has become very close to my heart. By being part of the task force, it has not only helped me heal, but also I hope to be able to help other families avoid the tragedy that mine experienced and to heal.

Q: What is your favorite place to vacation?

A: Anywhere that has some sort of history to it.

Q: Describe a favorite childhood memory.

A: My parents taking my sister and me places to see things and experience things, particularly historical sites, was very impactful for me. I'm not sure I appreciated it at the time, but now that I am older I do.

Q: What is your favorite comfort food?

A: I'm Irish so I would have to say anything that has potatoes in it!

Q: What is the most memorable holiday present you received?

A: I can't remember if it was a holiday present, but probably one of my favorite gifts is a dollhouse that I have that was handmade by my grandfather. I know that the house took a lot of time to make and is very personal, so it is one of my cherished items.

Q: What are you hobbies?

A: Traveling, whether it be day trips, weekend trips, or longer trips. I love being able to take my kids to explore unique places and learn the history behind them.

Q: What brings you joy?

A: Being with family.

HELPFUL ARTICLES

From Thanksgiving to New Year's: Protecting Your Mental Health During the Holidays

By Doreen Marshall, Ph.D., AFSP Vice President of Mission Engagement

Here are some things you can do to help with stress during the holidays.

- Take a risk and connect with others if you are feeling lonely.
- Take breaks.
- Remove something from your holiday "to do" list.
- Find a balance between being with others and being alone.
- Find the choices within the obligations (assuming you can't avoid them entirely).
- Prioritize activities that support your mental health.

Click here to read the full article.

Dealing with the Holidays after a Suicide Loss

By Jack Klingert, Alliance of Hope for suicide loss survivors

- Here are some tips and ideas to help with the holidays ahead.
 - Talk with your family about how you're feeling and what you are up to.
 - You don't have to do the same activity as you have done in years past.
 - If you attend a gathering, it may help to have a friend in the room for support.
 - Have a Plan B just in case.
 - Avoid hosting the event at your home.
 - Mention and acknowledge the person who is missing around the table.
 - Avoid alcohol and other intoxicating substances during these events.

Click here to read the full article.

<u>Click here to read a helpful article on the Grief.com website</u>, **GRIEF & THE HOLIDAYS: DEALING WITH THE PAIN**

2022 DATES FOR FREE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING (\$170 VALUE)



Provided by the PCCD Grant, the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit (WIU) is offering **FREE** 8-hour Youth Mental Health First Aid certification training at the WIU Admin. Building, 102 Equity Drive, Greensburg, PA. Training includes a manual and lunch.

Click here to see the flyer with the 2022 dates and links to registration.

Youth Mental Health First Aid is a comprehensive training specifically designed to equip educators, family members, and caregivers (18 years or older) with the skills and knowledge to identify, understand, and respond to the signs or risk factors of mental health concerns in youth. Just as CPR helps you assist an individual having a heart attack, Youth Mental Health First Aid helps you assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis.

RAY OF HOPE FALL 2021 OUTREACH & TRAINING EVENTS

10/12/21: As the October featured speaker at Come, Talk Inc., John Herrmann shared his personal story about his childhood, mental health struggles, suicide, and being part of the LGBTQ+ community. John did a fantastic job and bravely spoke about his journey to mental wellbeing.

10/16/21: Council on Substance Abuse and Youth (CSAY) Mon Valley National Night Out Event in Monessen, PA. The National Night Out Event aims to build relationships between police officers and the community.

10/16/21: James Nelson, Jr. and Heather McLean organized the Halloween Mental Health Awareness Benefit in Scottdale, PA. This fundraiser benefitted the Ray of Hope.

10/22/21: QPR Training/S.A.F.E conducted for the Allegheny County Suicide Prevention Task Force

11/09/21: Heather McLean served on a panel discussion at the Unity in the Community - Bridging the Gap Event.

11/17/21: QPR Training conducted for the Westmoreland County Community College faculty, students, and park police. There were about 50 participants who received training.

11/19/21: Ray of Hope Suicide Awareness and Prevention Conference

12/09/21: QPR Training conducted at the Private Industry Council for the Dad's Matter staff members



10/12/21: John Herrmann and Amanda Morrison at Come, Talk Inc.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS



We reached out to Dr. Sam Lonich and asked for some recommended books.

For professionals working with suicide loss survivors and suicide attempt survivors:

- Grief in Childhood: Fundamentals of Treatment in Clinical Practice by M.Y. Pearlman et al
- November of the Soul: The Enigma of Suicide by George H. Colt
- The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression by Andrew Solomon
- A Winding Road: A Handbook for Those Supporting the Suicide Bereaved by Michelle Linn-Gust

For individuals experiencing a suicide loss:

- Healing the Hurt Spirit: Daily Affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide by Catherine Greenleaf
- Unfinished Conversation: Healing from Suicide and Loss by Robert Lesoine et al
- Seeking Hope: Stories of the Suicide Bereaved by Michelle Linn-Gust et al
- Grief Day by Day: Simple Practices and Daily Guidance for Living with Loss by Jan Warner
- Your Life After Trauma: Powerful Practices to Reclaim Your Identity by Michele Rosenthal

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

CRISIS RESOURCES

Westmoreland County Crisis Hotline Crisis Text Line National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ) Trevor Project Text Line (LGBTQ) Veteran's Crisis Line Veteran's Crisis Line Chat/Text 1-800-836-6010 Text HOME to 741741 1-800-273-8255 1-866-488-7386 Text START to 678678 1-800-273-8255 Press 1 Text 838255



LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Mental Health America of Southwestern PA (MHA-SWPA) Virtual Support Groups

Contact Heather McLean at 724-433-1359 or hmclean@mhaswpa.org for more info.

- Aging Up Support Group (transitional ages 18-26): Meets 2nd & 4th Monday, 4-5 pm
- Mental Health Support Group: Meets 2nd & 4th Tuesday, 1-2 pm
- LGBTQIA+ Support Group: Meets 2nd & 4th Tuesday, 6-7 pm
- The "Anyone" Support Group (for anyone wanting to talk): Meets 1st & 3rd Wed., 6-7 pm
- **Caring Ones Support Group:** For those supporting a loved one with a mental health illness. Meets 2nd Monday, 6-7:30 pm, Contact Heather McLean: 724-433-1359 (*Starts Jan. 2022*)
- L.O.S.S. (Loved Ones Stolen by Suicide): Informal open support group for those who have lost a loved one to suicide. Meets 1st Tuesday, 6:30-8 pm, Contact Beth Crofutt: 724-834-6351

In-Person Support Groups

PLEASE NOTE: Due to high transmission rates of COVID, in-person groups may not be meeting. Please call first to see if the group is meeting in person or has been cancelled.

- Mon Valley Hospital LOSS Support Group: For anyone touched by suicide. Meets 2nd & 4th Monday, 1-2:30 pm, 1163 Country Club Rd., Monongahela, PA 15063, Contact Sam Lonich: 724-678-3601, splonich@gmail.com
- NAMI Family Support Meetings: Meets 2nd Tuesday, 7-8:30 pm, West Hempfield Presbyterian Church, 8 W. Hempfield Dr., Irwin, PA 15642, Contact Harriett Hetrick: 724-596-5071

Resource Center

Come, Talk Inc.: Resource center for anyone affected by suicide. 321 Main Street, Irwin, PA 15642, Contact Amanda Morrison: Call/Text: 724-978-1330, come.talk15642@gmail.com

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP LIST

STEERING COMMITTEE

Heather McLean - Chair Laurie Barnett Levine - Vice Chair Beth Crofutt - Treasurer Nina D'Antonio - Secretary Rachel Cunningham - Task Force Coordinator Sherry Anderson - Walk Chair Jessica Carns John Herrmann Samantha Kindelberger Gayle Pamerleau Bobby Tanyer Clare Vaill Richard Yaksic

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Ronel Baccus Shanea Clancy Carla Colello Kevin Daly Beth Deni Cassie Ellson Ariel James Bill Kemerer Sam Lonich Julie Lovis Rita McWilliams Joni Michalski Monica Minyon

Bree Piper Renee Raviart-Dadey Jackie Rider Maria Rock Michelle Seaman Katie Sheridan Patrick Showman Sue Soltis Sara Stenger Barb Tomko Lee Wagner Michele Wentzel Susan Yaksic

CONTACT US

409 Coulter Avenue, Greensburg, PA 15601 Phone: 724-834-6351

Website: <u>www.rayofhopewestmoreland.org</u> Membership Questions: ndantonio@wsci.org Newsletter Suggestions: ssoltis@wiu7.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, April 2, 2022 The 2022 Spring Spectacular Community Event

A FREE Event for All Ages!



1 pm - 4 pm Westmoreland County Fairgrounds



Planning is underway for this exciting event as we reach out to Westmoreland County families to have some fun and connect them to community resources.

Here are some of the exciting activities we have in store for participants.

- Egg Hunt
- Golden Ticket Prizes
- Bunny Photo Op
- Andy the Ambulance
- Balloon Artists
- Face Painting
- Food Trucks
- Vendor Tables
- And more!!!

Sponsored by Westmoreland County Behavioral Health/Developmental Services in partnership with the Ray of Hope Task Force



Saturday, September 10, 2022 16th Annual Suicide Awareness & Prevention Walk Twin Lakes Park, Greensburg, PA