



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 individuals across a lifespan.

2022 RAY OF HOPE SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION CONFERENCE



*FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT,
WHERE OUR HOPE TAKES FLIGHT*



Sponsored by the Westmoreland County BH/DS/EI Office, the Ray of Hope Task Force hosted our conference on November 18, 2022 at the Westmoreland County Community College. The theme for this year's conference was **From Darkness to Light, Where Our Hope Takes Flight**.

The conference began with an excellent keynote address by **Joshua Horner**, who is a motivational speaker, Certified Peer Support Specialist, personal trainer, and suicide loss survivor. Joshua's message focused on how we can stay present in the moment. He recommended that we think about what we're really grateful for as we focus on our breathing. One of the big takeaways was his suggestion to build a Wellness Toolbox, which are self care strategies we can employ when we may be struggling. Some ideas included praying, being in nature, working out, resting, writing, and asking for help. *Read more conference details on the next page.*



You can find Joshua on Facebook & Instagram - search for **Stayinit**. His STAYINIT podcast on Spotify is a place where you can listen as he explores ways to stay present, build a healthy life, and overcome adversity.

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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Bobby Tanyer, Ray of Hope Board Member, read a beautiful poem titled, **Open**, written by **Cheryl Miller**.



Our next speaker, **Amanda Morrison**, spoke about her reasons for starting **Come, Talk Inc.** in 2021, a free resource center for people affected by suicide. She lost her cousin to suicide in Oct. 2019 and her aunt to cancer in Dec. 2020. Come, Talk's volunteers have helped hundreds of people through self-care classes, guest speaker events, and community outreach. Everything that Amanda offers is free of charge and she relies on donations to help fund her many services. Come, Talk Inc. is located in the Norwin Chamber of Commerce in Irwin, PA. To learn more, please visit cometalkinc.com.



Nina D'Antonio, Ray of Hope Secretary, read a poignant poem titled, **The Mirror**, written by **Katie Lee**, a suicide attempt survivor.



David Delvaux, Clinical Liaison, Clarion Psychiatric Center, is a suicide loss survivor who spoke about losing a loved one to suicide. During his talk, he reviewed bracing for powerful emotions, dealing with stigma, adopting healthy coping strategies, and facing the future with a sense of peace. David also talked about some ways that have helped him cope with his losses including using social media platforms, creating tangible memories, teaching children and other people about his loved ones, and telling their stories to keep their memories alive.



The afternoon featured a Suicide Loss Survivor's Panel moderated by **Sue Soltis**, who also participated in the panel discussion. Other speakers included **Joshua Horner**, **David Delvaux**, and **Melissa Hughes**. Each speaker responded to pre-selected questions and did an excellent job sharing their stories and grief journey. Suggestions they had to share with the audience included finding support, locating resources, and having bravery to speak your truth.



The day closed with a fantastic presentation by **Faerie Grace**, motivational keynote speaker & author, who presented Kindness With a Twist. While twisting balloons, Faerie told the audience to celebrate ourselves and others, focus on what we can do, let our light shine, and spread light and life. To learn more, please visit FaerieGrace.com.



So many people were involved that made this conference another fantastic event! Thank you to our sponsor - Westmoreland County BH/DS/EI, the Conference planning committee, each of the presenters and panelists, and our exhibitors! And a special shout out to **Beth Crofutt** for her technical skills when Faerie Grace called upon her to play some music during Faerie's presentation!

2022 RAY OF HOPE CONFERENCE CONT.



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COMMUNITY EVENT PHOTOS



2022 SUICIDE PREVENTION CAPITOL DAY

Ray of Hope's Chair, Heather McLean, spoke on the PA Capitol Main Rotunda steps as part of Suicide Prevention/Awareness Day in Harrisburg on September 19, 2022. She was honored to join Pennsylvania Legislators, Suicide Prevention Alliance's Founder and CEO, **Govan Martin**, Suicide Attempt and Loss Survivors, other PA County Task Force Leaders, and Suicide Prevention advocates for this important day at the capitol.

Suicide Prevention Alliance hosted the 2nd annual event aimed at raising awareness for suicide prevention and offering hope to all who have been impacted by suicide. Heather represented the Ray of Hope and spoke about all of its endeavors over the last year highlighting several of the major events, the importance of offering support to suicide loss survivors, and also the importance of offering trainings to educate the community in suicide prevention and awareness efforts.

Suicide Prevention Alliance Board member, **Amanda Hammock**, a two-time attempt survivor, spoke about her belief that hearing the lived experience from an attempt survivor is critical to the cause but often a voice that is missing from all areas of the work. She hopes by using her voice that the stigma of what is thought of as the "face(s)" of suicide changes.

Lisa Carmoli, a suicide loss survivor, spoke eloquently about her brother's life and the impact his death has had on her and her family. She painted a beautiful portrait of a loving and extremely talented son, brother, and uncle who fought a hard battle but ultimately died by suicide.

The morning was filled with heartfelt stories from those who are working on the frontlines to help end the stigma, educate, work within the community, and ultimately save lives.

"Together we can do this, together we will save lives." ~ Govan Martin

Heather & Amanda's speeches can be viewed in their entirety on the Ray of Hope Westmoreland County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Task Force Facebook Page.



Govan Martin



Heather McLean

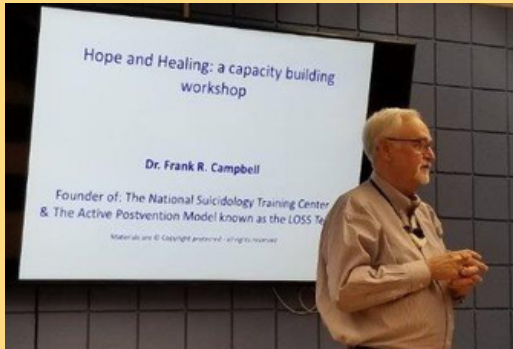


Amanda Hammock



Lisa Carmoli

LOSSTEAMS TRAINING BROUGHT TO OUR AREA!



On October 21 & 22, 2022, the Ray of Hope and the Westmoreland County BH/DS/EI Office were proud to bring internationally renowned **Dr. Frank Campbell** to Westmoreland County. Dr. Campbell taught his LOSSTEams Training to task force members, clinicians, bereavement counselors, and suicide advocates who came from all over Pennsylvania. This 2-day training was an invaluable resource in the Ray of Hope's goal of starting a LOSS (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) Team here in Westmoreland County.

A LOSS Team is a group of suicide loss survivors, first responders, and community members who provide information about resources, as well as offer comfort and hope, to those impacted by the loss of a loved one to suicide as soon as possible following the death. Research shows that the sooner suicide loss survivors can be connected to resources and other loss survivors, the better their long-term mental health outcome.



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



Provided by the PCCD Grant, the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit (WIU) is offering 8-hour **Youth Mental Health First Aid** certification training at **NO COST** to participants 18 years and older. Training sessions include a participant manual and lunch.

Youth Mental Health First Aid is a comprehensive training specifically designed to equip educators, family members, and caregivers 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.

All training sessions are held from 8 AM - 4 PM at the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit, 102 Equity Drive, Greensburg, PA 15601.

- January 12, 2023
- February 16, 2023
- March 16, 2023
- April 13, 2023
- May 18, 2023
- July 13, 2023



To register for a session:

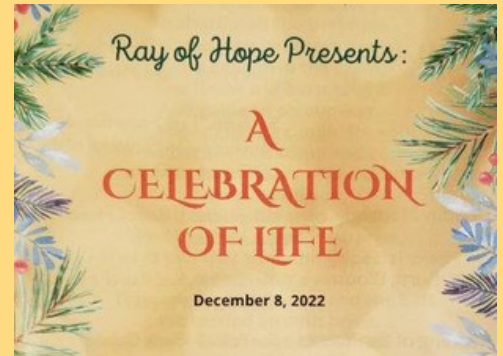
Go to

<https://www.wiu7.org/apps/events/> and search for **Youth Mental Health First Aid**.

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE!

On December 8, 2022, the Ray of Hope Task Force held the first **Celebration of Life** event to honor and celebrate those we have lost to suicide.

The evening began with a heartfelt welcome from Ray of Hope Chair, **Heather McLean**. As a single candle was lit, **Carla Colello**, Ray of Hope Board Member, read the poem, **Light a Candle**, which focused on shattering the darkness we feel when we lose a loved one.



Next **Lisa Goldberg**, Ray of Hope Coordinator, read a **Holiday Memorial** poem while five candles were lit. The candles represented grief, courage, our loved one's memory, the light of love, and the light of hope.

Melissa Hughes, new Ray of Hope member, shared her story of love, loss, suffering, and surrender. A couple months after she lost her husband to cancer, she lost her only son, Mason, to suicide on November 14, 2021.

Sue Soltis and **Carla Colello** took turns reading the names of those lost to suicide along with sentiments sent in by family members and friends. As each name was read out loud, **Clare Vaill** rang a bell and Heather and Lisa delivered a lit candle to each family. This part of the evening was very emotional and moving.

Carla Colello read a story, which reminded us that our grief is like a jagged rock. Over time, our grief becomes a little easier to bear and slowly turns into a smooth rock.

Our final speaker was **Beth Crofutt** who read **A Litany of Remembrance - We Remember Them**. This is a beautiful poem that had participants repeat the phrase, "We remember them" after each verse. It was a lovely way to close out this special evening.



RAY OF HOPE FALL 2022 OUTREACH & TRAINING EVENTS

As you can see, we have been very busy this fall! Check out all the events we supported and the trainings we conducted or hosted!

- 09/19/22: Suicide Prevention Capitol Day, Harrisburg, PA
- 09/23/22: CSAY Recognition Luncheon - Heather McLean & John Herrmann won awards
- 09/26/22: QPR Training - Abundant Life
- 09/30/22: CSAY Prevention Conference
- 10/01/22: Home Depot Kids Workshop
- 10/02/22: NAMI Walk
- 10/06/22: Poverty Summit
- 10/12/22: Fall Fun Meeting - Human Services & Preparedness Coalition
- 10/19/22: WCCC Resource Day
- 10/20/22: MHA Annual Dinner
- 10/21/22: LOSTeams Training
- 10/22/22: LOSTeams Training
- 10/24/22: QPR Training - New Alexandria Fire Department
- 10/26/22: AAA's Senior Expo
- 10/28/22: Giving Tree Open House
- 11/01/22: Send Silence Packing - Seton Hill
- 11/07/22: QPR Training - Norwin School District
- 11/09/22: Statewide Suicide Prevention Task Force Meeting, Harrisburg, PA
- 11/18/22: Ray of Hope's Conference
- 12/06/22: QPR Training - Come, Talk Inc.
- 12/07/22: Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce Holiday Bash & Business Expo
- 12/08/22: Celebration of Life Dinner
- 12/10/22: Spotless Solutions Christmas Party
- 12/13/22: Westmoreland County School Counselor's Association
- 12/21/22: QPR Training - Area Agency on Aging

CSAY AWARDS

Ray of Hope's **Heather McLean** and **John Herrmann** were honored by the Council on Substance Abuse and Youth (CSAY) at the 2022 CSAY Award Luncheon on September 23, 2022.

Heather, Ray of Hope's Chair, was awarded the **Changemaker Award**, while John, a dedicated and tireless Ray of Hope volunteer, was honored as **A Hand Above The Rest**.

Please join the Ray of Hope Task Force in congratulating Heather McLean and John Herrmann!



OUR LENDING LIBRARY IS HERE FOR YOU!

If you're interested in reading any of the books listed below, please contact the Ray of Hope Coordinator, Lisa Goldberg by email at egoldberg@mhaswpa.org or phone at 724-875-2415. Books can be signed out for a period of 30 days and must be picked up and returned at 409 Coulter Ave., Greensburg, PA 15601.

If you would like to donate a book or funds towards the purchase of a book, we will put a nameplate in the book if you donate it in your loved one's memory.

Do They Have Bad Days in Heaven

By Michelle Linn-Gust, Ph.D.

Diary of a Broken Mind

A Mother's Story, A Son's Suicide, and the Haunting Lyrics He Left Behind

By Anne Moss Rogers with Charles Rogers

Emotionally Naked

A Teacher's Guide to Preventing Suicide and Recognizing Students at Risk

By Anne Moss Rogers and Kimberly H. McManama O'Brien, Ph.D, LICSW

His Bright Light: The Story of Nick Traina - *Donated in memory of Mason Hughes*

By Danielle Steel

Must Be the Witches in Heaven

An irreverent guide for knowing what to say after someone dies by suicide

By Heidi Bryan

Still With Us

Voices of Sibling Suicide Loss Survivors

Edited by Lena M. Q. Heilmann

Suicide in Schools: A Practitioner's Guide to Multi-Level Prevention, Assessment, Intervention, and Postvention - *Donated in memory of Mason Hughes*

By Terri A. Erbacher, Jonathan Singer, and Scott Poland

Suicide The Forever Decision

By Paul G. Quinnett

The Invisible String - *Donated in memory of Eve Frances Lieberum*

By Patrice Karst

The Kissing Hand - *Donated in memory of Eve Frances Lieberum*

By Audrey Penn

The Next Place - *Donated in memory of Eve Frances Lieberum*

By Warren Hanson

Voices of Healing & Hope

Conversations on Grief after Suicide

By Iris Bolton

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

CRISIS RESOURCES

Westmoreland County Crisis Hotline	1-800-836-6010
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	988 or 1-800-273-8255
Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ)	1-866-488-7386
Trevor Project Text Line (LGBTQ)	Text START to 678678
Veteran's Crisis Line	1-800-273-8255 Press 1
Veteran's Crisis Line Chat/Text	Text 838255



LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Please Note: These groups are not meant to replace therapy but provided added support.

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 Monday, 4-5 pm
- **LGBTQIA+ Support Group:** Meets 2nd Tuesday, 6-7 pm
- **Mental Health Support Group:** Meets 2nd Tuesday, 1-2 pm
- **The "Anyone" Support Group (for anyone wanting to talk):** Meets 1st Wed., 6-7 pm

In-Person Support Groups

PLEASE NOTE: Please call first to see if the group is meeting in person or has been cancelled.

- **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
- **Hope & Healing Support Group:** For those recovering from a past suicide attempt. Meets 1st & 3rd Monday, 6-7:30 pm, Contact Heather McLean: 724-433-1359
- **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, 6:30-8:30 pm, Contact Beth Crofutt: 724-834-6351 Ext. 118
- **Mental Health Support Group:** Meets 4th Thursday, 1-2 pm, Contact Julie Kostenbader: julie.kostenbader@gmail.com

Additional Resources

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

HOLDHOPE-Parents Supporting Parents: Helping parents to support their teen or young adult child through a mental health challenge, Contact Deana Cline: Call 724-268-0094, support@holdhope.info. Website: <https://holdhope.info/>

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP LIST

STEERING COMMITTEE

Heather McLean - Chair	Jessica Carns
Laurie Barnett Levine - Vice Chair	John Herrmann
Beth Crofutt - Treasurer	Samantha Kindelberger
Nina D'Antonio - Secretary	Gayle Pamerleau
Lisa Goldberg - Task Force Coordinator	Sue Soltis
Sherry Anderson - Walk Chair	Bobby Tanyer
Carla Colello	Clare Vail

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Tony Aubrey	Julie Lovis	Katie Sheridan
Ronel Baccus	Rita McWilliams	Patrick Showman
Mike Blahovec	Susan Meighen	Amber Snyder
Brandi Brukner	Joni Michalski	Dorey Stabile
Shanea Clancy	Monica Minyon	McCarron
Beth Deni	Stefany Munsch	Sara Stenger
Karen Egler	Krystal Noble	Celeste Tempo
Nicole Gallagher	Karen Peconi	Barb Tomko
Melissa Hughes	Bree Piper	Stephanie Turin
Ariel James	Zachary Portser	Lee Wagner
Meggan Keenan	Lisa Reffner	Michele Wentzel
Bill Kemerer	Jackie Rider	Carol Winters
Deborah Kemerer	Maria Rock	Richard Yaksic
Abra Kuniak	Sarah Saucier	Susan Yaksic

Photos in this edition were contributed by: Rod Agras, Chuck Carr, Lisa Goldberg, Faerie Grace, Heather McLean, and Sue Soltis.

CONTACT US

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Membership Questions: Email Lisa Goldberg at egoldberg@mhaswpa.org

Newsletter Suggestions: Email Sue Soltis at ssoltis@wiu7.org