

***Committed to the Reduction of  
Suicidal Behaviour and its  
Impact on Individuals, Families  
and Communities***

# Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council



Waterloo Region  
Suicide Prevention Council  
[www.wrspc.ca](http://www.wrspc.ca)

**NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE 6  
DECEMBER 2013**

## WRSPC Funds New Suicide Ideation Group



Rondi McFarlane with Skills for Safer Living  
Program Team Lead Allan Strong

### ***From Wanting To Die To Wanting To Live***

Rondi McFarlane shares her personal story of participating in the Skills for Safer Living Group:

Three years ago, I started the group "Skills for Safer Living." Prior to starting this 20 week group, I was in the psychiatric ward of the hospital more than I was out of it. I didn't even finish the 20 weeks the first time. I was very unstable and continuously suicidal. When I was asked if I wanted to do the group again, I wasn't sure if I really wanted to. I did however decide to do it again. I can honestly say that this program saved my life! I learned many new skills to take forward in my life, many of them I still use as a means of coping in my daily life today, especially when I am having a difficult time. What stands out in my mind the most, that I learned from the group

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was, "I have choices." We can't always control what happens to us and around us, yet we can choose what we do with our emotions around any situation. I am also more aware of my own "inner dialogue," and just how that plays a large part of what I was choosing to do.

When I finished the program I began volunteering at Self Help Alliance in Kitchener. I was still struggling and still in and out of the psychiatric hospital, yet my time in hospital was becoming less and less. I have not spent a night in the hospital now for about a year. I am still volunteering at Self Help Alliance and I work some weeks up to 40 hours a week. I have taken many training sessions offered through the Self Help Alliance, including my ASIST training. I just enrolled into the Social Services Worker Program at Conestoga College. I started this September.

Without The Skills for Safer Living program, I would not be here today. I still struggle at times and have my moment of dread, however, that is what they are now, just moments. Prior to the program my moments were stretched and measured by months and years. Now they are measured in a day or even just a few hours. I now see a future for myself, and it looks quite amazing! I have the Skills for Safer Living group to thank for that.

***The WRSPC is funding a twenty week pilot group for individuals in our community that experience suicide ideation but have never attempted suicide. This group will run out of the Self Help Alliance, a division of Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington Dufferin. "The support of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council for this pilot project is vital to be able to expand the range of supports available to those experiencing thoughts of suicide", states Allan Strong, Team Lead. For more information about the ideation group, contact 519-740-7782 X 0.***





Members of ACCKWA and Grand River Hospital in front of the World Suicide Prevention Day banner during the community fair. A big thank you to Simpson Print for donating the Banner.

Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council continues to host events on the actual day each year, September 10. The location moved this year to Kitchener City Hall and attendees liked the flow between the community fair in the rotunda featuring twenty local organizations, the M & M charity barbeque outside at the King Street entrance and the annual butterfly release, which moved to a more intimate setting at the back of City Hall in the Duke Street Garden. 175 butterflies



Our colleagues in Wellington Dufferin promoting a My Life Matters Hockey event.

were released that evening in memory of those lost to suicide. We also had the honour of hearing three youth speak about suicide prevention training they had taken (with funding from local service clubs) and the impact it has had for them. Although this day is an emotional one, it is also one filled with much love and connectedness to others.

In addition to the Regional event held in Kitchener, the Council also financially supported three other World Suicide Prevention Initiatives.

Cambridge – This year marked the first time an event has been held in Cambridge. A big thank you to Self Help Alliance for hosting this first ever event. Held during lunch, there were speakers, a living garden and three panellists who bravely shared their stories of struggling and what has helped them on their recovery journey. These speakers were very inspirational and encouraged everyone to believe that light and hope is



Tana Nash is joined by the three fabulous youth speakers, Natalie Way, Cy Miller and Dana Fux and Kitchener - Waterloo MP Peter Braid

possible.

Wilmot Wellesley – Two hundred and fifty fall planting bulbs were available free to the community at various locations to plant in honour of someone lost to suicide. Two large banners also educated the community on World Suicide Prevention Day.

Wellington- Dufferin - Three different 'My Life Matters' events were featured at hockey games throughout the Counties to reach a more varied population and a greater number of people. Information and resources were available from the many members of the Suicide Prevention Council of Wellington-Dufferin.

## Full Day Zumbathon To Raise Awareness And Money



Promoting Zumbathon at World Gym

World Gym is a great supporter of community events and this past June added the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council to it's list of recipients by hosting its first ever Zumbathon. This fun filled day featured a barbeque, healthy shakes, fabulous music and a lot of great dancing. Spring boarding from the principle that exercise is great for your mental health, \$3,982.55 was raised and donated to the Council.



## Bell Let's Talk Physician Training



With \$16,000 in funding granted to the WRSPC by the Bell Let's Talk Community Fund, the WRSPC have been implementing suicide prevention training for primary care providers which includes family physicians, nurse practitioners and medical residents from the McMaster Medical school located in Kitchener. In June, sixty-one folks registered for the training "Youth Suicide: Your Role as a Primary Caregiver" and came to hear presenters Dr. Margaret Steele from Western University and Dr. Neal Stretch, a family physician from Hanover. In addition to a dynamic presentation,



*Dr. Steele, Dr. Stretch and Tana Nash*

attendees also left with new youth resources including posters for physician interview rooms displaying QR codes linked to local youth resources, wallet sized laminated cards to hand out to youth, and resource cards displaying helpful websites, phone apps and walk in counselling. 89% strongly agreed or agreed that they developed an increased level of comfort and interest in addressing suicidal thoughts. In the program feedback, 93% strongly agreed or agreed that the program met their expectations and also that the information learned will be used in their future practice.

In November, 57 primary care providers attended the second in the series, focused on adult suicide. Yvonne Bergmans, a suicide intervention consultant with St Michaels Hospital in Toronto and the developer of a group for individuals with recurring suicide attempts, was the presenter. Attendees worked on actual scenarios and used new tools to ask adults questions about suicide. Again, many resources were shared including the assessment roadmap developed for both youth and adults. Both of these trainings were accredited by the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

## New Laminated Cards Circulated To Waterloo Region District School Board Secondary Schools

New laminated resource and help cards were developed for the family physician training and are also now being used by

Lutherwood Children's Mental Health, Grand River Hospital, Crisis Respite and the crisis lines. In addition, this wallet sized card was distributed to all counselling offices throughout grade 7/8 and secondary schools of the Waterloo Region District School Board.

## Karim the Dream



*Selling tickets at Karim the Dream.*

Honouring their friend Karim who took his life, eight basketball teams came out to support the second annual Karim the Dream event. In addition to the fast paced action on the courts, there was an amazing silent auction filled with great prizes, the WRSPC literature table, a barbeque, pictures of



*Promoting silent auction items at Karim the Dream.*

Karim and a visit by the Kitchener firefighters. A big thank you to Angela Olano, Julia Bernier, David Bernier and their families and friends for raising awareness about suicide prevention in a creative and engaging way. Reaching and talking to males about suicide is not the easiest but this event shows that it can be done. \$3,500 was donated to the WRSPC from this event.

**The money from Karim the Dream will once again pay for the training of all WLU Faculty of Education students in Safe Talk, a suicide alertness program in January 2014.**



## 10th Annual Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament



*The Grand River Hospital Team having fun!*

For friends and family alike, it is hard to believe that this past August marked the 10th anniversary of the Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament. With the sun shining down, 32 teams picked up their clubs in support of suicide prevention initiatives for our Region. Another 45 joined the teams for dinner to complete the day. A big thanks to all the volunteers, everyone who has supported the event, the businesses that donated prizes, and especially the organizing committee and the Tudisco family. In total, \$25,500 was raised!

**The day is perfectly summed up by MC Gary Doyle's opening remarks on his 570 news talk show the following morning:**

*"I wasn't here yesterday. I spent the day with a group of friends that have turned one loss into many gains. It's a privilege to be asked to emcee the Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament. It's hard to believe it's been ten years already. I never met the young man, who tragically took his own life. The golf tournament was intended as a way for family and friends to get together and share memories and a fun day. It's turned into a major fundraising effort in support of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council. A lot of laughing happened yesterday and there are still a lot of tears. It makes me wish I had met the man. You can see the pain on the faces of his family while speeches are made and cheques distributed. During an impromptu live auction of a Leafs jersey with "Dan" on the back with the number ten, one young man offered up 500 dollars. I joked, you should get a Leaf for that. Suicide is not a fun issue. We talk about it occasionally on the*



*Family members Julie and Hannah Sheppard smiling and working hard*

*show and I am amazed and saddened by the number of people who have been affected by an issue that used to be taboo. My family has been affected, and I'm pretty sure a lot of you know someone, or is related to someone who took their own life. I've learned a few things over the years. I had a specialist on the show last year who wants us all to change the way we talk about the subject. He said, "you can't commit suicide any more than you can commit cancer." So, we'll remove the word "commit", from the conversation. The Suicide Prevention Council does great work. They deserve our help. You may never know who needs the support."*

Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament Committee member and employee of Maple Leaf Foods Courtney Mitten submitted the following entry for their employee Volunteering to Make a Difference Contest. This story of voluntarism was one of fifteen chosen to win a \$1000 to the charity of the employee's choice. Congratulations Courtney and thank you on behalf of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council.



*Courtney Mitten and Daniel's father Joe Tudisco.*

*Ten years ago, I lost someone close to me to suicide. Like many other people who have been affected by suicide, I have often wondered what I could have done to prevent the loss of my friend. I strongly feel that the one thing that we as a community can do to decrease suicide rates is to remove the taboo around it. By talking about suicide and bringing awareness to the subject, it lets people suffering with mental health issues and thoughts of suicide know that there is another option, life.*

*To honour the life lost, my friend's loving family and friends rallied together and started the Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament. Little did we know that this once family only attended event would grow into a yearly event with over 200 participants from in and around our supportive community. This has led to our golf tournament becoming a large and important fundraiser for the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council.*

*As a member of the Golf Tournament Committee I have helped in recruiting golfers, collecting donations and prizes for the winning teams as well as silent auction items. I have also implemented tools to help keep our committee on track, such as utilizing a critical path and helping with other organizational tricks. I am also a key volunteer on the day of the tournament and perform many duties such as creating golfer registration sheets, assisting golfers with getting their clubs to their carts, taking photographs and supporting the silent auction.*



*The annual tournament, now in its 10th year, has fundraised over \$125,000 for our community and has helped bring our Region a paid coordinator dedicated to suicide prevention through presentations, public awareness, connections to local organizations and identifying and filling program gaps that exist. Our Region has become a leader for suicide prevention and the tournament has been the catalyst to make this happen.*

*Although this event stemmed from a tragedy, it is a fun filled day with much inspiration and hope. Hope for a suicide free community and hope that through this tournament lives can and will be saved.*

*In honour of Daniel Tudisco, our mission is to increase awareness of suicide prevention efforts, promote dialogue and to support the work of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council.*

## Dimensions of Suicide – Building Resilience and Strength a Success!



*Dr. Michael Ungar*

The Council was very excited to have Dr. Michael Ungar as the key note presenter at the free community forum we provided and during the full day professional conference. Using an engaging story-filled presentation, Dr. Ungar helped us understand the key ingredients necessary for children to be resilient and how these factors intertwine. Close to 200 people



*Allan Strong*



*Dr. Jennifer Brasch*

in attendance over the two days learned practical strategies for nurturing positive development in their respective roles. Professionals were also treated to two additional speakers, Allan Strong and Dr. Jennifer Brasch, who shared skills that



*Our wonderful MC Meghan Shuebrook*

can be used when working with a suicidal client. Dr. Brasch's messages of hope and how to instill hope, were an inspiring way to end our day. The free community event and the low conference cost were made available as a result of fundraising efforts of the WRSPC and our major sponsor, Simpson Print.



*Speakers, volunteers, Council and committee members*



Fabulous volunteers and Council members  
Joanna Sipos and Laura McShane

## Thank You To Our Volunteers!

We are very grateful to our many volunteers who plan events, stuff packages, attend events to hand out literature and speak to the community, and work behind the scenes to advance suicide prevention in our community.

*Holidays can be a difficult time and not always match the bubbly music being played on the radio and in every store.*

*The WRSPC hopes you can find some peace and hope during the Christmas season.*

# Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council

[www.wrspc.ca](http://www.wrspc.ca)

Our Council feels so blessed for the financial support we receive from our community. A big thank you to the many people who have made a donation to the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council the last half of this year, supported an event or purchased t-shirts.

- Bluevale
- Wilfrid Laurier Crisis Lines
- Karim the Dream
- Telus Cambridge Centre
- Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament
- Lisa Brown Charitable Foundation
- Grand River Collegiate Peer Leaders
- World Gym Kitchener Zumbathon
- Audrey Reitzel's 80th birthday
- Waterloo Collegiate Institute Lighthouse Group



and...numerous personal and anonymous donations and purchasers of t-shirts.

With this financial support the Council can continue to provide education and resources, deliver presentations throughout the community, support programs and advocate for better services. You can make a donation on-line from our website at [www.wrspc.ca](http://www.wrspc.ca) or directly at **WRSPC, 285 Benjamin Rd, Waterloo N2J 3Z4.**



# Why???

## Suicide Let's Talk About It

### Domus Student Housing Promotes Crisis Lines

Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo work very hard at making residence students feel included and provide suicide prevention training for resident students. But what about the students that live off campus? Domus Student Housing, with over 2,000 student units in Kitchener-Waterloo asked that same question. The solution; a large magnet stuck on every fridge in their units listing the local crisis line for help. Thank you Domus for promoting the local help lines.

### Thank You To Facilitators of the Side by Side Bereavement Group



Judi Hopkin, one of the three facilitators of the Side by Side Suicide Bereavement group, receiving a thank you plaque on behalf of Community of Christ Church who donate the space each month for the support group.

### Presentations and Events

The Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council made presentations and attended many events distributing material the last half of 2013 including:

- Avenue Rd Baptist Church
- WCI Lighthouse Group
- Karim the Dream
- Grand River Hospital's presentation of Margaret Trudeau
- Cambridge Memorial Hospital lunch and learns
- Wilfrid Laurier Walk
- Faith EMC
- Wilfrid Laurier Crisis Lines

### WRSPC helps the Police bring Rachel's Challenge to Cambridge Catholic high schools.

'Rachel's Challenge', is a series of student empowering programs and strategies that equip students and adults to combat bullying and allay feelings of isolation and despair by creating a culture of kindness and compassion. Presentations were made to all students at St. Benedict's School, Preston High School and Monsignor Doyle. Free community events were held at each of these schools in the evening. You can learn more at: <http://www.rachelschallenge.org/>



Peer leaders at Grand River Collegiate Institute getting ready for Stand up to Bullying week in their My Life Matters t-shirts. Thank you for your support.

### Coming Events

Elmira Free Community Skate	January 2
Bell Let's Talk Day	January 28
CTV's Pledge to End Bullying Campaign at Fairview Park Mall	March 8
Bowl-a-thon Fundraiser	April 26