

*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

**NEWSLETTER
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CASP Conference

In October of 2016, Executive Director Tana Nash, Program Coordinator Elisa Brewer-Singh and CEO of Lutherwood John Colangeli joined 580 other delegates at the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention national conference held in Iqaluit, Nunavut titled Hope, Help and Healing. The conference was of relevance and interest to all who practice and contribute in the areas of social and individual wellness, suicide prevention and the reduction of suicide.



It is widely recognized that suicide statistics across Nunavut and Nunavik have become the highest in the country. The Premier of Nunavut has declared suicide a 'territorial crisis'. With the recent suicide inquest in Nunavut, the need for a conference to address suicide was noted as relevant and essential. Nunavummiut are grappling with why so much suicidal behaviour continues to occur, and what can be done to address this

phenomenon. While Tana, Elisa and John were there to show support to neighbours in the north, they recognize that we are all grappling with these questions and were also there to learn.

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Appreciating that suicide is the topic, the conference's overarching goal was to enable participants to explore solutions for embracing life by developing, supporting, sustaining and encouraging positive lifestyles; considering, developing and acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes for better addressing suicide ideation; and networking, connecting and building relationships with the numerous participants and presenters towards the cause of suicide reduction and life affirmation.

Sessions were solicited and selected based on the three themes – Hope, Help and Healing. Elisa, John and Tana attended many sessions that would be relevant to Waterloo Region.



- Hope sessions focused on approaches, methods and situations that include an optimistic attitude of mind and that are based on an expectation of positive outcomes related to events and circumstances encountered in one's life

and the world at large.

- Help sessions focused on approaches, methodologies, actions and situations that have made it easier, less severe, and more successful towards the reduction of suicide.
- Healing sessions recognized and focused on approaches that include potential resolution to a degree that affected individuals are able to lead a fulfilling existence without being overwhelmed by trauma, and life's prior and current situations that are causing personal distress.

The conference's three days held daily plenary sessions and panels that were very impactful and informative including a deeper understanding of the The Inuit Tapiriit of Kanatamiit's (I.T.K.) National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy and the multiple challenges Inuit people face, powerful messaging from Travis Price, the creator of Pink Day and Carol Todd, the mother of Amanda Todd.

Skills for Safer Living Youth Pilot

For six years, the Skills for Safer Living group have been taking place in Waterloo Region for adults. This is a group for individuals who have attempted suicide and is facilitated by the Self Help Alliance and is modelled off a group called P.I.S.A. that was developed and has been running for many years at St. Michael's hospital in Toronto. Only four cities across Canada have offered this group and we are very proud that we have this group in our region as an intervention and prevention skill based group that has been demonstrating much success. In fact, so much, and that our Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN) provides permanent funding to run this group in Cambridge, Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph. Based on the success of this group, a modified group for post-secondary students and a group for individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts but have not attempted suicide, have been added to the menu of groups.

Based on these groups, two groups were piloted this past year. A group specifically for 17-18 year olds and a group for 13-16 aged youth who are struggling with thoughts of suicide. This group was very unique in design as it provided a mandatory family support group which happened concurrently. The youth and family groups were delivered in partnership by Self Help Alliance and Lutherwood, with WRSPC securing the funding. These two groups for individuals under 18 were the first time in Canada they have been held.

The goals of the group for ages 13-16 were to regenerate a sense of hope for living, increase education and emotional support and decrease duration, intensity and frequency of suicidal thoughts. The group covers four key modules: keeping safer, emotional literacy, problem solving and interpersonal relationships and uses the following assumptions as pillars to success: all individuals participating in the group have strengths and passions, want to live differently, are responsible for making their own choices, are able to learn strategies and are both learners AND teachers.

Here are a few comments that were shared in evaluations: A youth participant said "A thought won't kill you, feelings won't kill you but behaviour could – really stuck with me – stained my mind – that's really true. I think about it every time I am distressed. Hold on for another hour or two and I will feel better. Feelings Will pass. This has probably saved my life a few times". Another youth stated: "My thoughts of suicide and self-harm are less frequent, more rare. When I have thoughts, they are not as heavy and last a shorter time. I am using strategies to deal with them." And a father commented "Before I was VERY uncomfortable with the concept of suicidality/self-injury and how our son was dealing with it. Now I have a more complete understanding of the self-harm continuum... now we see that it is a process that will have to be worked on. This is not a quick solution. There is no pill".

The WRSPC is now looking hard to find sustainable funding so that these two important groups can be added to the menu of groups provided in our Region. To learn more about these groups, watch a video and to register, visit our website:

<http://wrspc.ca/preventing-suicide/skills-for-safer-living/>

Program Coordinator Update

by Elisa Brewer-Singh

I would like to start by thanking so many of you who have reached out with support and words of encouragement as I have transitioned into the role of Program Coordinator. I am

so thankful for our community and your passionate hearts for suicide prevention.

The past couple months have been a flurry of activity as I have been learning so much about the moving parts within the Council. I have had an opportunity to deliver many presentations within the community, to meet with some of our volunteers and partners of the Council and to connect with the amazing Board Members for WRSPC (as an aside, if you have a chance to meet with and talk to the WRSPC Board ask them about why they do the work they do with the Council, you will be thoroughly encouraged!). These opportunities to engage with our community have been so meaningful to me and the many connections I have made are invaluable.

I am currently working hard on our suicide bereavement support groups and social media, and am excited about some new upcoming projects for 2017.

If I haven't had an opportunity to meet with you in the community yet, I look forward to meeting you soon!

Suicide Alertness Training for Parents

Since May 31, 2016, The WRDSB has trained hundreds of parents and guardians in safeTALK, a 3 hour suicide alertness training delivered by WRDSB staff and parent trainers. This safeTALK training is part of the WRDSB Mental Health Strategy and system focus on well being. The training has been offered in collaboration with the Waterloo Region Assembly of Parent School Councils, the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council and made possible through the Ministry of Education Parents Reaching Out Grant. The parents and guardians who have taken the training have provided feedback about how meaningful the training has been for them, in that they feel better prepared to address suicidal thoughts from others. The WRDSB remains committed to continue to provide this training throughout the year. Please consult with WRDSB website for training dates and registration information.

<https://www.wrdsb.ca/blog/2016/10/17/additional-safetalk-training-sessions-for-wrdsb-parents-guardians/#.WDRjUdIrlDU>

WRSPC Annual General Meeting

The day before World Suicide Prevention Day, WRSPC hosted its Annual General Meeting featuring keynote speaker Waterloo Region Police Service Chief Bryan Larkin who inspired the fifty plus attendees. It was also an opportunity to recognize and say good-bye to long time members Dena Moitoso, Kathy Payette and Linda Bender who have all contributed to the success of the WRSPC.



With Special Thanks

WRSPC thanks all of our friends who are helping to make our community suicide safer through their events, awareness, education and generous donations.

13th Annual Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament



Thank you for raising \$15,000 this year and a total of \$223,000 since the tournament began.

Mitchell Snider Memorial Golf Tournament

Thank you for raising \$14,500 this year to support suicide prevention initiatives in this Region including Safe TALK training in Ayr.



Reach out Awareness Event

Thank you for inviting hundreds of people from the community to your home in Ayr to raise awareness in support of WRSPC.



WRSPC gratefully acknowledges the following contributions made during the past few months:

Stantec's Dollars for Doers Program
Bridge's School Dress Down Day
St. Francis of Assisi Trillium United Church



Jays Event - a Breaking the Silence Event

Thank you for taking bus loads to the Jays Game in Toronto in memory of Ian Prong and for raising awareness of depression and mental illness and raising \$3990 for suicide prevention.



Charity Barbeque

Thank you Vereena Fawzy for collecting \$3865 in donations during a charity barbeque held at your home in honour of your brother Karim.



911 Baseball Tournament

Thank you for selecting WRSPC as the recipient of your funds this year for the annual 911 baseball tournament raising \$2500 for WRSPC.



....and the numerous personal donations

With much gratitude

Why???

Suicide Let's Talk About It

World Suicide Prevention Day

by Adrienne Luft and Elisa Brewer-Singh

September 10th is a day to remember loved ones that we've lost to suicide as well as learn about, celebrate and promote suicide prevention efforts and mental health services that exist in our community to support those who are struggling. For Waterloo Region it is a day that holds great significance as our Council and community have always stayed true to the date since its inception in 2003. The theme this year was Connect, Communicate, Care, and the day's events certainly embodied this message of being one.



The Waterloo Region was fortunate to be a part of three new initiatives this year that highlight this year's theme of being one from an International, National and Local perspective. For the first time since its inception, the International Association of Suicide Prevention chose the colours yellow and orange as a symbol of hope that unites us globally in our suicide prevention efforts. We are proud to say that 100,000 yellow and orange ribbons were distributed nationally, with Waterloo Region being the driving force behind this initiative. Secondly, the Waterloo Region was chosen as one of 13 locations for Mysterious Barricades-a dusk to dawn cross-country concert focused on suicide prevention and the human connection through the language of music. This concert provided an opportunity for the WRSPC to partner with long-time supporter and Council

stakeholder Wilfrid Laurier University who graciously hosted the concert, information fair, charity barbeque and butterfly release. This year we were encouraged by the community efforts of Grand River Hospital to be one as they participated in a simultaneous butterfly release with staff and patients who were unable to join us at WLU.

On behalf of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council, thank you to the World Suicide Prevention Day Committee and the countless volunteers for their hearts, dedication and energy throughout the entire planning process and on September 10th. Thank you to everyone who joined us on this day and for those who continue to rally in their efforts to prevent suicide; your solidarity and caring has the power to change lives.

Presentations/Events

WRSPC has presented in the following locations the past 6 months. Thank you for inviting us in to learn more about suicide prevention and what you can do.

- Stomp out the Stigma at Grand River Hospital
- Orientation Fair for Lutherwood
- Elmira Mennonite Church
- Grand River Conservation Authority
- Breakfast for Mental Health hosted by Interfaith Community Counselling
- Grand River Collegiate Institute
- Day in Psychiatry, hosted by Grand River Hospital
- St. Francis of Assisi Parish
- Sir John A MacDonald

Upcoming events

Safetalk Training in Ayr- Saturday February 25, 2017

(To register please email jpeacock@lutherwood.ca)

WRSPC 8th Annual Bowlathon- Saturday April 22, 2017

Ayr Awareness Event- July 15, 2017

Mitchell Snider Memorial Golf Tournament - July 22, 2017

Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament- August 10, 2017

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Suicide Information and Awareness is Important - You Are Not Alone
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