

***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  
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## **15th Annual Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament**



On August 9, 2018 the 15th and final Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament was hosted at the Grand Valley Golf Club. Over 150 people joined together in support, to share a hug, shed a tear and look back on fond memories with a smile.

Throughout the journey together over the past 15 years, the tournament has played a large part in the success and growth of the WRSPC. The tournament provided us a community platform to discuss suicide and with their help the Council received charitable status and became incorporated. Funds raised over the years helped us to print and distribute much desired literature and education, provide conferences, workshops and training, host World Suicide Prevention Day and hire the first part-time coordinator which has now turned into a staff of three.

Yes, we are talking about suicide much more openly today but that was not the case fifteen years ago. The Tudisco family and this committee have continued to talk and be leaders for suicide prevention both locally and across Ontario and Canada. They were recognized by the Ontario Association for Suicide Prevention for their work and were showcased at the annual

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention conference in Halifax.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to the Tudisco Family, the entire Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament Committee and everyone who has supported the tournament throughout the years including sponsors, donors and cookie bakers.

“The tournament was started by Geoffrey Cole, a cousin of Dan’s. It was just for family and I think we raised \$200.00 the first year. It became a passion of ours to continue supporting the WRSPC and the community to bring awareness and try to erase the stigma of suicide. I cannot believe that 15 years have passed. We have met many wonderful people along the way and hope to continue the friendships we have made. Thanks to all those who have been a part of our committee. We could not have done it without their incredible contribution.”

- Louise Tudisco



For these reasons, the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council was honoured to present the first WRSPC Tana Nash Leadership award in recognition of outstanding leadership and commitment to Hope, Help and Healing in Waterloo Region to Joe and Louise Tudisco.

## World Suicide Prevention Day 2018

By Tamara Nowakowska, World Suicide Prevention Day Committee Member

The Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council works tirelessly throughout the year in preparation of our annual world suicide prevention day event. As both a volunteer and person affected by a loss from suicide, each year I look forward to reaching out to the community and finding ways to continue to educate myself on the importance of suicide prevention. The theme this year was "Working Together to Prevent Suicide". This brought in members of our community both new and returning, to discuss and learn how we can continue to support our community.



photo credit: Sean Glider, Snapd KW

This year we reached a crowd of educators, medical professionals and passerby's in the community who were eager to learn more. As we all sit and reflect together, there is a sense of calmness and belonging that overflows the room. While the day is emotional for many, many also exclaimed feelings of hope and affinity that with each year we come to remember the lives we've lost and we work together to support the community. Despite the rain, every aspect of the day was a huge success. The information fair brought in familiar faces from the community as well as new organizations that were happy to educate each individual who approached on the importance of self-care and mental wellness. We continued the day with our guest speakers and speakers from the council. The Victoria Park Pavillion provided an inviting environment where all guests could gather around before heading outside for the charity BBQ and butterfly release. Once families and friends parted for a quiet butterfly release, our community members began to pack up for the evening. The event was a truly successful intimate gathering that showed hope and strength for the community.

## Linda Bender Suicide Prevention Training Bursary for Students

By Rob Martin, WRSPC Council Member

The Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council announced the Linda Bender Suicide Prevention Bursary for Students on September 2018 at the Annual General meeting. The Bursary was created in honour of Linda Bender. Linda was a strong advocate, supporter, and member of the council for many years. 2

Her work on suicide awareness, prevention, training and life promotion on the council and in our community has impacted our community greatly. The council is continuing Linda's work on suicide prevention training with this Bursary for students.



The Bursary will assist students and recent graduates in Waterloo Region to access suicide prevention training. Preference will be given to individuals who have personal or professional goals that align with the mission, vision and four pillars of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council, and/or individuals who have been personally touched by suicide in some way.

Providing opportunities for students to learn suicide helping and awareness skills is an important step toward creating suicide-safer communities. It is each step that all of us take to reduce the stigma around suicide, and to support one another that will help us to reach the goal of a suicide-safer community.

We thank Linda Bender for all of the years of work and dedication she gave to the council and our community. Her legacy continues with this Bursary

## Westmount Oktoberfest Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament



Presented by:

# RAYMOND JAMES®

The 53rd annual Westmount Oktoberfest Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament presented by Raymond James was hosted on October 4th and 5th at the Westmount Golf and Country Club. Over the years this tournament has provided incredible support to the community, raising over one million dollars for various charities in the Waterloo Region. WRSPC was honoured to once again join alongside the amazing committee and the 32 Professional and Amateur all male teams as their charity of choice for the second year of a three-year partnership. Executive Director Elisa Brewer-Singh had the opportunity to speak to the 130 men attending the 2 day tournament about the importance of finding and having support when we experience obstacles and struggles in our lives: "Just like in golf we will have our good days and bad days- good holes and bad holes. What we do with the bad ones are the keys to



recovery and resiliency.... We want you to keep playing and keep moving forward."

While the temperature this year was a little chilly that didn't stop the camaraderie and friendly encouragement from being heard on the course. A small token of our appreciation for the attendee's generosity and support in the form of hot packs for the golfers hands helped combat the chill.

Our sincerest thanks to presenting sponsor Raymond James, the 49 additional sponsors, prize donors, all of the golfers and our volunteers for another great year! Over \$50,000 was raised for suicide prevention in our community. A special thank you to the organizing committee, the staff and board of Westmount Golf and Country Club for their continued support. We look forward to seeing you on the green in 2019.



### 3rd Annual Reach Out Awareness Fundraiser

By Joanne Martin, Co-Chair of the Reach Out Awareness and Support fundraiser Committee

The 3rd annual Reach Out Awareness and Support fundraiser in support of suicide prevention took place on July 7th on Spragues Road and featured a live performance from Flash Johnson. This event is in memory of Rachel Ann Sousa, Sam Vitale, and all of those who have lost a loved one or are currently suffering with mental health issues. This event brought people from the community together. Many people at this event had lost a loved one or were touched in some way and it was wonderful to see the compassion shared by so many that night.

The event included two guest speakers who spoke to the crowd and touched hearts of many who were listening. One speaker was Noah Irvine, a 17-year-old student who advocates for mental health change and who lost his mother to suicide and father to prescription drug overdose. Noah's story sparked an interest and we wanted to learn more about the work that he is doing both provincially and federally. Elisa Brewer-Singh was the second speaker, and is dedicated to reducing the impact of suicidal behaviour in Waterloo Region as the Executive Director of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council. Darryl Law from 107.5 Dave Rocks was the master of ceremonies for the



evening and showed his support by giving back to the community.

Raffle prizes were drawn through the evening and lots of bidding took place at the silent auction table, a way for people to show their compassion and support for the cause. My Life Matters T-shirts were sold and there was a lantern table set up where attendees could light a candle in honour of a loved one that struggled, just a few of the many special activities taking place that evening. In total, over \$11,000 was raised which will go towards the WRSPC and community events like a free skate on December 30th at the Cambridge Ice Centre which will help raise more awareness. We are committed to working with WRSPC to strengthen supports for mental health and suicide prevention at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital. A huge thank you to our amazing sponsors and committee members; Joanne Martin, Henry Sousa, Julia Thornton, Lisa Blaney, Jessica Balesdent, Eddie Sousa, Sandy Patterson, Deborah Myers, Leanne Love and Kayleigh Robinson. Please visit our website for more information:

<https://reachoutawareness.wixsite.com/we-all-matter>

### After Whys Production

By Linda Flemming, WRSPC Member

AfterWhys is a play about seniors' mental health and suicide with a message of hope and resiliency, written and directed by Catherine Frid and commissioned by the Suicide Awareness Council Wellington Dufferin. The WRSPC hosted this production on Friday Sept 28th at Luther village, co-sponsored with the Elder Abuse Prevention Council.

Approximately 40 seniors, service providers, and community members attended this play. It was sensitively and realistically produced and acted to convey the impact of the death of a senior by suicide. The play depicted a circle of friends, who as older adults, were faced with the death of their friend/family member, in a way which they did not understand. The play was a powerful demonstration of disbelief when someone dies by suicide, and the questions of "why", "what does it mean", the emotional upheaval, and the effects on each person in their relationship with that person. The acting was excellent and engaged the audience. The lead role particularly was believable and depicted a grief stricken brother, who was surrounded by well-meaning friends, but was grappling with his own sense of emotional well-being, and how this kind of loss was affecting his life.

The play did a great job, of showing the many signs you may see or not see of someone struggling with emotional and mental health illness, particularly in later life. In the end, it showed how support and reaching out could help in the grief process, and that it is important to stay engaged with supports in whatever capacity you can. After the play, there was an opportunity to debrief through the Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington and to learn how to manage through this difficult situation.

It left people feeling that this could happen to anyone, knowing what we can do to promote wellness in the senior sector, and understanding how we can support each other. It was overall a very effective educational tool.

## Annual Mitchell Snider Memorial Golf Tournament

By Marlene Brown, MSMGT Committee Member



On August 25 we had our 5th Annual Mitchell Snider Memorial Golf Tournament.

Together we raised over \$15,000 for a total of \$73,500 in 5 years! These funds support the WRSPC in continuing to provide services and programs, to

bring awareness, and to reduce the impact of suicide in our community. A huge thank you to all our volunteers, friends, and family who come out each year to support, golf, donate silent auction items, and remember Mitchell.

Next year we'll be at New Dundee Golf and Country Club on Saturday July 6, come out and join us!

## November Mental Health Promotion Events

In November, the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council was able to host two free community events hoping to promote mental health and wellbeing outside of traditional mental health spaces.



The first event we were able to host was in proud partnership with Waterloo Fire Rescue, and was an event catering to those in First Responder roles, where often there is an expectation to be tough and

stay strong throughout the traumas they experience. This event welcomed Mike Denomme, a friend of the council and one of the founders of the KW Legacy group, and Scott Chisholm, a First Responder, Suicide Prevention Advocate, and well-known speaker, to share messages promoting wellbeing. We were pleased to see individuals from a variety of agencies attending this event.

The second event hosted was a Mental Health Promotion Concert, made possible by Rhapsody Barrel Bar for providing a venue, Jesse Parent and Craig Dubecki for working to plan the event and gather musicians, and the other talented musicians who played. The event was M.C'd by Craig Dubecki, WRSPC Volunteer, author, speaker, and musician, who provided mental health education and specific messaging around men's mental health between sets.

"Thank you those who helped make November 26's Mental Health Awareness Concert at The Rhapsody, the huge success it was! It was an honor and privilege to be part of this event, and see living proof of how the magic of music can transport us.

Remember how we defined what strength is – strength is believing in and being compassionate to ourselves and asking for help when we need it. Whether it's for you or someone else, believe in oneself and focus, and you will feel the strength! Where you look is where you go!" - Craig Dubecki



## SAWW World Suicide Prevention Day Events

By Marietta Wagler, SAWW member

The WRSPC supported SAWW by granting them \$500 to help plan a beautiful and meaningful event on World Suicide Prevention Day.

Smiles - laughter - blades sliding on the ice. These were the sights and sounds at the Wilmot Recreation Complex on Monday evening September 10th. More than 50 skaters and spectators of all ages participated to commemorate World Suicide Prevention Day. Participants were greeted by SAWW Committee members offering swag, 'My Life Matters' t-shirts, and other information about suicide prevention and where to go for help. To help get out the message, 10 t-shirts were thrown onto the ice where skaters scrambled to get the prize. While the children may not have fully understood the intent of the evening, the adults were certainly aware of their support of the evening.

Soft lights - gentle rain - tall trees - quiet reflection. Following a few words of encouragement and affirmation of life, about 40 walkers (children to seniors) followed outside to walk through Schmidt Woods carrying a light to show solidarity with those left behind and re-affirm life. Walking through the darkness with a small tealight to show the way, symbolizes the darkness one can experience in their life. Following that small beacon, stumbling along the way, brought us all out to fuller light. Before going home, each walker was invited to take a bag of white fall-blooming crocus bulbs to plant. Our hope is to see this symbol of life each fall throughout our Township.

## Inspiring Speakers

The WRSPC was fortunate to attend the Mental Health Awareness Breakfast put on by Suicide Action Wilmot Wellesley (SAWW) and Rotary Wilmot where Scott Chisholm, founder of the Collateral Damage Project, spoke to a crowd of people from the area about his journey. Scott lost his father to suicide at a young age and he himself has been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after years of working as a first responder. During Scott's presentation he shared his opinion that suicide prevention needs to focus more on the wellbeing of the living - on those who are struggling, who have struggled, and who may struggle in the future, and those who



have been left behind by suicide loss.

Scott also spoke at the First Responder’s Wellness Night put on by Waterloo Fire Rescue and Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council (WRSPC) along with Mike Denomme from KW Legacy Group. Both speakers shared their inspiring journeys in relation to mental health. The message was clear; it’s ok to struggle, it’s important to ask for help and it’s certainly ok to talk about it. Mike also shared his advice on how you can support a friend who is struggling: “you don’t have to know anything about it, just be there and listen”.

**Melloul-Blamey Construction Safety Symposium**

By Deb Henhoeffler, Loretta Stockie, & Jane Fish, Melloul-Blamey Construction

Melloul-Blamey Construction wants their employees to be successful, as they contribute to the success of the company. Mental health impacts success. Melloul-Blamey is not only concerned about the mental health of their employees, but also the mental health of their family members.

Melloul-Blamey hosts an annual Safety Symposium with a variety of health and safety topics for their staff. With the company being a male-dominated work environment, they were hesitant to introduce the very sensitive topic of mental health at this year’s symposium.



Elisa Brewer-Singh and Amanda Demmer from WRSPC provided eight, thirty-minute mental health education sessions to Melloul-Blamey’s staff of 185. The sessions provided an opportunity to open dialogue with this hard-to-reach group. For example, at one of the sessions a comment was made by a senior employee “to just move on” ... followed by a comment from a fellow coworker... “it’s not always that easy”. Such comments along with many others, generated conversation proving the WRSPC presentations were a success. These mental health sessions help to break down the stigma within the construction industry.

Mental health affects all of us.

**WRSPC Grant to Waterloo Fire Rescue**

By Bryce Kipfer, Waterloo Fire Rescue, Peer Support Team

The ASIST training that our Peer Support Team received through the generous funding from WRSPC has had a profound impact on our organization. We are much better equipped to

serve someone in severe emotional distress, situations we see regularly on the job. It has also given us a framework to care for our peers as we try to integrate our personal lives with the vicarious trauma we have absorbed at work.

Firefighters are helpers by nature, like other first responders. We’ll do whatever it takes to get the job done and our training has historically focused on the technical parts of the job, like CPR or auto extrication. Unfortunately, only in recent years have we begun to address the emotional skills we need to help others and ourselves. ASIST is one of the first practical training tools we have had to deal with an intense emotional crisis like suicide.

Another positive impact the training has had is to help normalize our personal struggles. As we have more and deeper conversations about our mental & emotional health, it seems like we’re getting more comfortable opening up. Maybe learning to ask difficult questions directly makes it a little easier to answer those same questions for ourselves. Even though this is an indirect benefit of our ASIST training, it might represent our best opportunity for hope and healing.

**Free Community SafeTALK Trainings**

We’re grateful to have been able to offer two free SafeTALK trainings over the past month within our Waterloo Region community, providing spots for 60 individuals to gain the critical suicide alertness skills taught within this program. SafeTALK is a 3.5hr training that gives individuals the skills and comfort to recognize the signs of suicide, ask directly about suicide, and link a person who is having suicidal thoughts to a keepsafe person who can provide an intervention. The first safeTALK in Ayr was provided by funds raised in the 2018 Mitchell Snider Memorial Golf Tournament. The second safeTALK in December was provided by donations received at the WRSPC World Suicide Prevention Day event this September 10th, 2018.

According to the 2016 Canadian Community Health Survey, a little over 1 in every 6 people age 15 and over in Waterloo Region have seriously considered suicide at some point in their life. Likely, we all encounter someone every day - a family member, friend, coworker, client, or stranger - who is having or has had thoughts of suicide. By training individuals in our community in SafeTALK we’re working towards building a suicide-safer community where we can recognize and support individuals experiencing thoughts of suicide before those thoughts lead to actions, and so we can do so without judgement or stigma attached. Knowing how to ask directly about suicide and how to get someone having thoughts of suicide to proper supports goes a long way in preventing suicide losses and promoting recovery. We hope to be able to offer more opportunities for SafeTALK training in our community in the new year.

**Bridges of Hope**

By Olivia Miller, co-creator of Bridges of Hope

*“If your why is big enough, your how will always show up.”*  
Nick Foley

Bridges of Hope is a mental health awareness initiative that began back in July when Gretta sent me an article about an

inspiring teenager named Paige Hunter from Sunderland, UK. Paige went to a local bridge in her area and covered it in positive messages. Paige is a prime example of what Nick Foley, a leadership idol of mine, explained. Her inspiring actions sent a ripple effect through her community and beyond, and resulted in the prevention of 6 suicides.

Sadly, there has been a suicide at our high school every year that we have attended and we know that a lot of students struggle with their mental health. Gretta and I decided that we could adapt this idea for Waterloo Region, and help bring hope to those who need it. Our 'why' was huge, so we trusted our 'how'.

During a weekend this past October we posted pre-made uplifting, positive messages on three bridges in our region: Hartman Bridge in New Hamburg, Freeport Bridge in Kitchener, and Waterloo Park Bridge in Waterloo, and also ran events at two of these bridges with the help of volunteers. Participants could sign up ahead of time to have a specific message posted under their name and/or accompany us in attaching the messages. Our weekend's events hosted a variety of speakers, including individuals whose lives have been affected by mental health, local politicians, and representatives from Interfaith Counselling Centre and the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council. Our weekend was photographed by Hilary Gauld Camilleri, who donated her time to helping with publicity and connections.



photo credit: Hilary Gauld Camilleri

Our goal with this initiative was to provide better education to the community about mental health, to bring people together in support of individuals who deal with daily struggles, and to infuse more positivity into the lives of the people around us. We saw many people connect and share their similar stories. Parents of those who lost loved ones to suicide were able to see that they're not alone. Others reached out to us privately to explain how much it meant to them that somebody - anybody - was speaking up. We even had sponsors and partners; Stitch Graphix, Scran & Dram, Interfaith Counselling Centre. All donations went to the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council.

The weekend was a great success, and approximately 40-50 community members attended each of the events that were held. The support we received throughout the process was incredibly encouraging, and we were given so many wonderful platforms to spread our message. A lot of local newspapers and radio stations allowed us to publicize our project. Local authors

and mental health professionals reached out because they understood that we had a unique perspective on the issue at our age. Thanks to local politicians, including Catherine Fife and Harold Albrecht, statements about our initiative were taken to Queen's Park and other significant meetings. We learned so much from our research and simply from those we met along the way. The conversations created and connections made through our project made every step worth it.

As we all know, mental health is something that can affect anyone, regardless of their background. It's important that we continue to work towards lessening the stigma and that we create and foster open and honest conversations about mental health from all angles. Gretta and I plan to continue working towards improved mental health in our region, and are committed to advocating for those who struggle through our involvement with groups such as Student Senate at Waterloo Region District School Board and Smart Waterloo Region's Youth Ignite Here.

Together we can help to end the stigma and change attitudes towards mental illness. Bridges of Hope 2019 is coming soon, and we hope you'll join us on our journey.

## Upcoming Events

- 4th Annual Jacob Ranton Memorial Basketball Tournament... **December 14 & 15**
- Cambridge free community skate... **December 30**
- Elmira free community Skate... **January 3, 2019**
- Ayr free community Skate... **March 2019, TBD**
- 10th Annual Bowl-a-Thon... **April 13, 2019**
- 2nd Annual Top Home Chefs Gala... **April 27, 2019**
- Unique Boutique Fashion Show... **May 1, 2019**



## Thank You

- Coopy's Classic Golf Tournament
  - The Co-operators Cambridge Claims Unit Party with a Purpose in Memory of Kim Filer
  - Ian Prong... Breaking the Silence
  - Moksha Yoga
  - 911 Baseball Tournament
  - Smitty's Fine Furniture
  - Raymond James & Steele Wealth Management
  - Melloul-Blamey Construction
  - Reach Out Awareness and Support
  - Westmount Oktoberfest Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament
  - Daniel Tudisco Memorial Golf Tournament
  - Mitchell Snider Memorial Golf Tournament
  - Bridges of Hope Event
- Each and every donor, volunteer and advocate for suicide prevention/life promotion