

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention opens Greater Minnesota Chapter

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New York, NY - The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) has opened its newest chapter. The addition of the Greater Minnesota Chapter brings the total number of AFSP chapters in the U.S. to 36.

Suicide is a national health problem that claims a life every 16 minutes. In Minnesota suicide has claimed nearly 4,000 lives from 1999 to 2006 (the most recent statistics available). Tragically, it is the second leading cause of death for ages 15 to 34 and the fourth leading cause of death for ages 35 to 54 in the state.

Based in Minneapolis, the Greater Minnesota Chapter will cover the 76 counties from Dakota, Scott, Le Sueur, Blue Earth and Faribault to the west and north. Their mission will be to bring nationally recognized suicide prevention initiatives to the entire state. The Chapter will also work to raise awareness and education as well as expand programs to support those bereaved by suicide loss.

A Rochester Minnesota Chapter is in development. That chapter will cover the 11 southeast counties of the state. An Out of the Darkness Community Walk took place in Rochester on September 19th and the city will also host a National Survivors of Suicide Day conference on November 21st.

Some of these programs include AFSP's "Out of the Darkness" Community Walks and the National Survivors of Suicide Day Conferences. The chapter will be hosting three Community Walks this fall (www.outofthedarkness.org) -

Twin Cities Walk in St. Paul on September 27. National Survivors of Suicide Day healing conferences (www.afsp.org/survivorday) will be held in Brainerd, Moorhead and St. Paul on November 21.

In addition to the Community Walks and National Survivors of Suicide Day, the newly formed chapter also plans to distribute the Foundation's newest educational film called "More than Sad: Teen Depression" at high schools throughout the area and continue AFSP's Depression Awareness Billboard Campaign which launched in the Twin Cities area in 2007. The billboards seek to educate the public about the serious nature of depression, and to urge those clinically depressed to see their doctor.

"Starting the local AFSP chapter in Minnesota has given me something positive to do in memory of my sister, Janell. Losing my sister was extremely difficult and despite the fact that her death was 20 years ago, not a day goes by that I don't think about her. I am confident that the work our chapter will be doing will help local survivors of suicide loss as well as help prevent others from taking their own life," said Audra Ruff, chairwoman of the Chapter.

There are currently nine board members for the chapter which includes medical doctors, licensed mental health professionals, business leaders, community leaders and survivors of suicide loss.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is the only national not-for-profit organization

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exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research, education and advocacy as well as to reaching out to people with mood disorders and those affected by suicide. For more information visit www.afsp.org.