



The Lighthouse

Newsletter of Touched by Suicide, Survivors Gather

Volume 10 Issue 4

Spring 2013

Inside this Edition:

From the Editor	1&2
Lighthouse Winter Issue Timing	3
My Long Gone Son, Ryan	3
Searching for Connections: An Interview With Kim Brabender	4&5
Back In Time	6
Psychological Effects of Global Warming	7
A Readers Response	7
A Website Resource	7
New Veterans Health Benefits Handbook	8



From the Editor **AS WE SEE IT: Stories That Never End**

I recently sat down with the thirty-eight issues of The Lighthouse that I have edited since its beginning in 2003. I wanted to re-read and re-live each story written by someone who most likely was a suicide survivor like me...someone willing to share his or her recollections and reflections of the loss of a loved one.

I have always encouraged survivors to put in writing those images, experiences and thoughts that are most relevant to their healing and well-being.

This is what I think such stories accomplish:

- For the writer, they serve as a release, a catharsis; and establish a reference point for knowing in the future that "this is who I was" at that time.
- Also, for the writer, it reflects an acceptance of the reality that I can express grief, hold dear precious memories and seek positive directions in my life.
- For the readers who are also survivors, the shared stories confirm that they are not alone, that others have endured losses similar to their own; and that they have the strength and conviction to reach beyond their present circumstances.
- And for the reader who has not personally experienced a life lost by suicide, the stories, cumulatively, provide a portrait of the continuing need for awareness, understanding and support.

As We See It - Continued on page 2

As We See It - Continued From page 1

I would like to honor all of The Lighthouse storytellers and let them know how much I appreciate their contributions to LIFE, to HOPE and to UNDERSTANDING. Following, is a list of the titles of their stories. If you would like to read or re-read any of them, contact me via mail or e-mail and I'll send a copy.

- Kim's Story and Diane's Story – Kim Brabender and Diane Knapp
- A Brush With Suicide – Bev Hasley
- Living Through Pain, Living for Tomorrow – Amber Fulkerson
- When It Happens – Jane Callaway
- I Am A Grandmother Survivor - Lori
- Being There For Friends And Family – Ramona Curtis
- An Old Man's Choice – Sally Lee
- Thinking About When Ryan Left This World – Cliff Knapp
- Report From Austria – Mazelle Hanson
- My Friend Marilyn's Suicide - Rose
- My Need To Find My Deceased Son In This World Too – Cliff Knapp
- A Compassionate Response – Clare Magee
- Alysia Remembers – Alysia McAleister
- The Journey – Laura Peterson
- Dreams of Patrick, Can Dreams Help With Healing? – Cheryl Robinson
- Bystander To Suicide – Lois Carlson
- Blackberry Nights – Diane from Oklahoma
- From Iraq To Hope To Suicide ... And Now – Mike Bowman
- Quilts of Comfort and Healing – Lucinda Cummings
- Legacy of Love – Donna Eversmeyer & Melodie Rupp
- Another Method Of Suicide – His Way – Betsi McKay
- Life As I Know It and Live It – Dick Gallien
- My Story Never Shared Before – Banu Uslu
- A Day In A Life – Kathleen Tresemer
- A Good Friend Takes His Life – Jerry Beck
- The Many Ways Suicide Has Touched My Life – Kent Svendsen
- Christopher's Suicide – Tina Morris
- Jo's Story: From Rejection To Acceptance and Self-love – Coreena Hendrickson
- An Unnecessary Tragedy – Dottie Pacharis
- Julie's Story – Elaine Robbins
- Healing in the 'NOW – Arden Jackson
- A Teen's Take On Suicide Prevention – Ashley Borgen
- Courage Examined – Karole Glaser
- Living With Complex-PTSD – Kathy Beach
- A Lighthouse For Me – Kathleen Wakefield
- A Mother's Plea in Response to Jordon Burnham's Story – Durita Sendelback

You do not have to be a survivor to contribute a story, essay or poem for inclusion in The Lighthouse. All expressions and perspectives are welcome.

Bud Wiener , Editor
bpwiener@yahoo.com
705 S. 6th St., Oregon, IL 61061
815-732-7486

THE LIGHTHOUSE WINTER ISSUE TIMING

Just like spring weather itself, you may have noticed that your winter issue of The Lighthouse was late in arriving. The Lighthouse is the product of several individuals and Sinnissippi Centers. Sinnissippi assists by formatting, printing, assembling, packaging and mailing The Lighthouse. And like all human services agencies in Illinois over the past several years, Sinnissippi Centers has been subject to a tightening of funding which has affected many things. One of those is the speed at which The Lighthouse can be processed at times. Most every time The Lighthouse can be done in a very timely manner. But occasionally an issue can be delayed while it is formatted, printed, assembled, and prepped for mailing. Also (and in the case of the winter 2013 issue) occasional and apparent delays in the postal system, presumably due to their own budget cuts, can affect when you receive your Lighthouse. We regret such occurrences and hope you understand.

MY LONG GONE SON, RYAN

Delightful, deep, introspective, intense,

To him love and peace made sense.

His time on this earth was much too short.

Being joyful in life was then his sport.

Twenty-six years was just enough

Before bearing the pain was just too tough.

One May morning he read a favorite book

Skimming the pages to take another look,

There he found the words he needed.

Fools Crow's message was soon to be heeded.

"It's a good day for dying", wrote his mentor.

Now the spirit world he was ready to enter.

So he took his life on that fateful day

And left me to hurt, cry, think, and pray.

His gifts to me were like silver and gold

Becoming more precious as I grew old.

Cliff Knapp
Oregon, IL

SEARCHING FOR CONNECTIONS: AN INTERVIEW WITH KIM BRABENDER

Editor's note: *Kim is one of the founders of Touched By Suicide, Survivors Gather. She told the story of the beginnings of our support group in the first issue of this newsletter, Spring, 2003. Her father died by suicide in 1985, and her brother-in-law took his life in 1996. In this interview, Kim addresses questions that reveal her personal journey of tragedy and healing.*

When your father died by suicide, where were you and how did you respond?

Kim: I was away at college, sitting at the desk doing homework. I heard a knock at the door and was surprised to see my mother, grandmother, and fiancé. I thought maybe they had been shopping or something and stopped to see me. I had no clue what they were about to tell me. I asked what they were doing, and my mother started to cry and told me my dad was dead. I asked how he died and what I thought I heard her say was he had shot himself in the garage. My immediate response was where did he get a gun? She then corrected me saying that he had shut himself in the garage with the car running. I was in shock. In my heart I had always felt that his life would end at his own hand, but I had no idea it would be this soon. He knew I was engaged to be married and I guess I felt that he would be there to give me away and be there to watch the three of us grow older.

How did your family and friends help you cope?

Kim: Unfortunately, after the funeral it was like no one in the family wanted to talk about it. Fortunately, when I went back to nursing school I was in good hands. I was in my psychiatric rotation and my teacher was amazing. I remember the first day back, she took me aside and asked how I was doing. I responded, "Pretty good". She said, "Are you really?" I lost it; I cried like a baby. Someone had given me permission to talk about it. The staff at Swedish American Hospital was also helpful since some of them had remembered caring for my dad that summer in their unit. As for my friends...I don't really remember too much, but most just didn't know what to say.

What kinds of responses were most helpful?

Kim: Honestly, with it being almost 28 years since his passing, I don't remember people saying much of anything. It really wasn't talked about.

I understand that you went to Wisconsin to see a 'medium'. Tell about that experience and why you took that trip.

Kim: I took the trip with a friend who was having a great deal of trouble grieving the loss of her husband, in an unexpected accident. I have always been intrigued by what John Edwards had to say on television and if this would in any way help her cope with her loss. I wanted to take her there. This woman came highly recommended, so we made out appointments and headed to Wisconsin.

I was surprised that she talked more about my marriage struggles at first, and then some connection with my brother in law. She basically said his was a traumatic death and felt it was with a fire arm. She also commented on how he was very sorry for what had happened and didn't want to hurt anyone.

Searching for Connections - Continued on page 5

SEARCHING FOR CONNECTIONS: AN INTERVIEW WITH KIM BRABENDER

Searching for Connections - Continued from page 4

She asked me if there was anything else I wanted to talk about and I mentioned hoping to connect with my dad. The thing that struck me about her comments was that she didn't feel that his death was a suicide, that he presented very calmly and that he was very much at peace. So I was very happy about that. I know these responses seem very generic, but the way they were presented through her was really amazing. She had no idea who I was, my background, or history. None of that information was given at the appointment time. If I remember correctly, she only took my first name when I made the appointment. It was interesting and I would do it again if given the opportunity.

Have you had experiences that you felt were some form of connection with or from your father?

Kim: Absolutely! Music was always a big thing for my father, so I feel him a lot in music. But more intensely when I have been at suicide survivor events or other functions and also when I have seen white German shepherds. My dad was a lover of this breed and this was the type of dog he had up until his death. It's not a common breed so when I see them, I feel it is a sign from him that he's still here.

Do you know of others who have experienced some type of response from a loved one who took his or her life?

Kim: We had a couple that had lost a son and their television would just switch channels at random times. Prior to his death the son would play tricks on his dad and change the channels. They had a repair man come and look at the TV and they could find nothing wrong with it. The TV continued to change channels randomly and they decided they didn't want to have anyone look at the TV anymore because they felt it was their son playing tricks and they enjoyed the company. We have many types of these stories in our support group.

What can you offer to others concerning messages or signs from "the other side?"

Kim: I believe sometimes we try too hard to receive messages/signs. I think that you have to be open to them and relax and they will come when you least expect it. I had never really had any signs until I went to a local person for a "reading" and a white German shepherd greeted me at the door. From that point on I knew that was my sign.

BACK IN TIME

Ketchum, Idaho is located in the south central part of the state in proximity of the famous Sun Valley ski resort area. A Ketchum cemetery plot contains the remains of not one but two family members who both died by suicide.

The grandfather, Ernest, was one of six children born in Oak Park, IL, July 21, 1899. His granddaughter, Margaux, was born in Portland, OR, February 16, 1954.

Much has been researched and written about the complicated lives of these two American icons. Their outstanding talents and contributions to literature and the arts are well documented and are readily accessible in libraries and on electronic web sites. Ernest Hemingway's family had a summer home in Michigan near Petosky. Even when he was as young as four his father, Clarence, taught him the skills associated with hunting, fishing, boating and wilderness camping in and around lakes and woods of northern Michigan. This early association with life in the out-of-doors instilled a passion for adventure and living in remote, isolated places.

Many of Hemingway's lifetime adventures in various parts of the world became the grist for some of his renown writings. However, recounting details of his travels, adventures, publications, and recognitions is not the intent of this essay. Rather, the focus is intended to consider aspects of his life and health that led to his suicide. Without citing locations and dates, these are some circumstances and conditions that cumulatively may have been triggers to his death:

- Wounded by a mortar and hospitalized
- Almost killed twice in airplane crashes
- Injury that resulted in a permanent head scar
- Contracted amoebic dysentery
- Hospitalized with pneumonia
- Hospitalized with concussion from a car accident
- Depressed after several good friends died
- Severe headaches, high blood pressure, weight problems, diabetes
- Heavy drinking to combat pain and injuries
- Liver disease and arteriosclerosis
- Kidney and liver rupture, dislocated shoulder, broken skull
- Failing eyesight
- Paranoia
- Electroconvulsive therapy
- Diagnosed with a genetic disease
- Bedridden

Obviously, he was in ill health a good part of his life and was alcoholic. He had been married four times and divorced three, which someone described as "Abandoned his wife before she abandoned him".

Hemingway's death occurred in his Ketchum home July 1, 1961 from a self-inflicted shotgun wound to the head. His granddaughter, Margaux, died July 1, 1996 in Santa Monica, CA from a drug overdose. She was 42.

It should be noted that his father died by suicide in 1928, and his sister, Ursula, and brother, Leicester, also took their own lives. His father was reported to have had the genetic disease hemochromatosis, the same disease diagnosed in Ernest in 1961. The condition causes an inability to metabolize iron and eventually results in mental and physical deterioration.

This literary giant's life was overflowing with remarkable accomplishments, including recipient of a Pulitzer Prize (1952) and the Nobel Prize for Literature (1954). He had a huge appetite for challenges, but also a remarkable tolerance for psychological and physical pain. In the end, he, like four other family members, found life too unbearable and ended it abruptly.

It all happened back in time, and now we reflect on the human drama of Ernest Hemingway's sixty-two years on earth.

Based in part on a Wikipedia article

A WEBSITE RESOURCE

Families for Depression Awareness is a national nonprofit organization that provides education, outreach, and advocacy in support of families and caregivers who have lost a family member to suicide or who suffers from depression. The website offers information, support and services. Also, publications can be easily ordered from their shopping cart., and a monthly email newsletter is available.

Contacts: 395 Totten Pond Rd., Waltham, MA 02451
[781-890-0220](tel:781-890-0220) www.familyaware.org

A READER RESPONDS

I really appreciate the recent statistics about veterans and the loss of 25 lives to suicide per combat fatality. It emphasizes why the armed forces takes this issue so seriously. I was asked to provide yearly suicide prevention classes to all the service members within my area of operation.

Rev. Kent Svendsen
Plano, IL

***Note:** Kent is a pastor and counselor and has two brochures available from his office:*

- A Permanent Solution To A Temporary Problem
- Understanding Suicide and Suicide Prevention

[815-786-4106](tel:815-786-4106) (cell)
www.umcplano.org

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF GLOBAL WARMING

In March, 2009 the National Wildlife Federation convened a forum of scientists and academic professionals to conduct an interdisciplinary assessment of the effects of global warming and the implications of climate change on public health preparedness.

Recommendations from the forum highlighted the need to address denial and apathy, and "to bring insight and commitment before it is too late". Global warming in the coming years may contribute to increases in psychological distress, depression, PTSD, suicide and violence. A recent study on psychological impacts of climate change suggests a need for governments at every level to prepare for such responses and to educate the public on the mental health ramifications of global warming.

The full report of the study or An Executive Summary of the National Forum and Research Report can be downloaded. The summary report includes a list of forum participants, summary, climate change lessons from the dramatic summer of 2011, summary findings, and solutions and recommendations.

NWF bulletin furnished by:
Fran Essex
Hutchinson, KS



The Lighthouse

Touched By Suicide
Survivors Gather

Volume 10 Issue 4
Spring 2013

Bud Wiener, editor
bpwiener@yahoo.com

Laura Peterson
Layout

The Suicide Support group gatherings are open to all individuals who have been touched by suicide. The group meets on the first Wednesday of every month 7:00–8:30 pm at Hospice of the Rock River Valley, between Dixon and Sterling at 264 Illinois Route 2, Dixon.

For more information or to add or remove names from the newsletter mailing list please contact:

Kim Brabender
(815) 438-2345
kbrabe@cghmc.com

Cheryl Robinson
crobinson@sterlingschool.org

Address corrections via mail: The Lighthouse, c/o
Sinnissippi Centers, 325 Illinois Route 2, Dixon, IL 61021

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DIXON, IL 61021
Permit No. 3

Address Service
Requested

NEW VETERANS HEALTH BENEFITS HANDBOOK

As a Korean War era vet, I recently received from the Department of Veterans Affairs a new comprehensive handbook detailing health benefits, eligibility requirements, resources and other relevant topics.

This sixty-eight page booklet is organized into thirteen chapters, plus a glossary of terms, that provides veterans with pertinent information. Chapter 3: Your VA Health Benefits contains eighteen topics ranging from Preventive Care Services to Medical Benefits Exclusions. The section on Mental Health Care (pp.14-15) lists services and programs available including Specialized PTSD Services and Suicide Programs.

Also, the Veterans Crisis Line in this section has the following phone number boldly printed: **1-800-273-TALK** (8255). The recommendation is to call for help if you notice any of these five signs:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself or others.
- Experiencing an emotional crisis.
- Hopelessness, feeling like there is no other way out.
- Talking about death, dying or suicide.
- Engaging in self-destructive behavior, such as drug abuse.

The VA is attempting to deal effectively with the wave of recent veterans discharged from active duty. This handbook should be a helpful reference for all veterans – for those already in the system and those looking for benefits.

For further information on suicide or mental health issues go to: www.va.gov and type in 'suicide' in the search box . There you will find numerous entries, including suicide prevention resources for veterans and their families, links to prevention and VA prevention programs and sites.

The Lighthouse is published quarterly at no charge. We welcome submission of news items, poems, reviews, and personal stories. Comments and suggestions to the editor are appreciated.

This newsletter is distributed in cooperation with Sinnissippi Centers, Inc. The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Sinnissippi Centers, Inc.