

CASP

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NEWS

Canadian Association
for Suicide Prevention

Association canadienne pour la
prévention du suicide

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Alberta takes action on suicide

by Gayle Vincent

Some people can only imagine the anguish of losing someone they love to suicide, but for many the pain is all too real, and the occurrence is all too often. For every person who dies by suicide, there are many more people harbouring suicidal thoughts or deliberately harming themselves. In fact, in Alberta more people die by suicide than in motor vehicle collisions.

The Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB) and its partners recognized that the causes of suicide and self-harm are complex and prevention efforts require coordination of many organizations across many sectors. The AMHB worked with health regions, government ministries, mental health organizations, survivors and others to prepare a comprehensive plan – A Call to Action: The Alberta Suicide Prevention Strategy.

“Suicide affects our entire society, not just those individuals who have a friend or family member that have attempted or died by suicide,” says Ray Block, AMHB President and CEO. “However, the plan does identify groups that are a priority because they are at higher risk to harm themselves.”

The provincial strategy consists of eight goals supported by objectives aimed at preventing and reducing suicide and suicidal behaviors as well as the effects of suicide.

1. Secure targeted and sustainable funding to implement the Alberta Suicide Prevention Strategy.
2. Enhance mental health and well-being among Albertans.
3. Improve intervention and treatment for those at risk of suicide in Alberta.
4. Improve intervention and support

5. Increase efforts to reduce access to lethal means of suicide.
6. Increase research activities in Alberta on suicide, suicidal behaviour, and suicide prevention.
7. Improve suicide and suicidal behaviour-related surveillance systems in Alberta.
8. Increase evaluation and continuous quality improvement activities in Alberta for suicide prevention programs.

“One of the unique goals of this strategy is to enhance mental health and well-being among Albertans by building resiliency within the population,” notes Chris LaForge, Director, Suicide Prevention, AMHB. “We look at factors that put people at risk of suicide and factors that can protect people. For example, youth connected to a

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ALBERTA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD

“Although much work remains to stop the tragedy of suicide, real hope exists through further research, education, advocacy and commitment... By following the beacon of light shining from Alberta through development of the Alberta Suicide Prevention Strategy and the implementation of the strategy that will follow, we brighten our prospects of preventing death by suicide.”

*- Dr. Paul S. Links, President, Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
in A Call to Action: The Alberta Suicide Prevention Strategy*

Alberta takes action **Kirby Report brings suicide awareness to a national table**

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meaningful adult relationship or mentor has been demonstrated to be a protective factor.”

Suicide prevention activities that are currently underway in the regions are being summarized. The AMHB is also leading a collaborative process with regions and ministries, agencies and survivors to identify potential activities that can contribute to the implementation plan for the strategy. Some approaches will be for all Albertans and some will be targeted at identified at-risk populations.

The complete report, background information and appendices are available at www.amhb.ab.ca

Gayle Vincent is CASP board member and Chair, CASP Research Committee

CASP Press Release- May 2006

Canada's lack of suicide awareness and prevention programs has been identified as a national priority by the Standing Senate Commission on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology in their report, *Out of The Shadows At Last*.

The report, published last week and chaired by Senator Michael Kirby, acknowledged that “every year some 3,700 Canadians kill themselves,” while admitting that this statistic “[does] not paint the complete picture” because “most suicide statistics do not account for suicides wrongly reported as accidental deaths, nor do they include incomplete suicides.”

The development of a national suicide prevention program was identified in chapter 15.6 of the report as an action that should be considered by the Canadian government.

“[An] area that would benefit from federal involvement is the issue of suicide prevention and awareness,” said the Honourable Elvy Robichaud, Minister of Health and Wellness in New Brunswick, in an excerpt from the report. “It is clear that this is a complex issue, and is everyone's responsibility, not just the health and mental health care systems.”

Appreciative of the findings and suggestions outlined in this report is Dr. Paul Links, President of the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention. CASP's Blueprint for a Canadian National Suicide Prevention Strategy, originally published in 2004, was quoted in recommendation 106 of the report.

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CASP Vision: We envision a world in which people enjoy an optimal quality of life, are long-living, socially responsible, and optimistic about the future.

Complexity of Suicide: Prevention, Intervention and Aftermath

Register for the CASP Conference
Oct 25-27, 2006

Check the website for registration and program information now!
www.suicideconference2006.ca

Highlights on page 4

“We are very pleased and encouraged by the clarity of the Senate report's recommendation that the federal government supports the efforts of the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and others to develop a national suicide prevention strategy,” said Dr. Links. “We see this as a very positive step in opening up the national conversation on suicide.”

For the complete copy of the *Out of the Shadows At Last* report, please visit www.parl.gc.ca/39/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/soci-e/rep-e/rep02may06-e.htm.
Contact: Dr. Paul Links, President, CASP Arthur Sommer Rotenberg Chair St. Michaels Hospital at (416) 864-6099 or (416) 864-6060 ext. 2689 e-mail: paul.links@utoronto.ca.

Award winners CASP2005 Ottawa

Service Award: Kathy Foley, Brandon, Manitoba, psychiatric nurse; local and provincial leader in suicide prevention initiatives.

Research Award: Professeur Michel Tousignant, Université du Québec à Montréal and **Dr. Monique Seguin,** Université du Québec en Outaouais

Student Research Award: Melissa Henry, McGill Group for Suicide Studies

Freddi Ford Award: Barbara Moffat, long time colleague of Freddi Ford

Media Award: Mike Beamish, Vancouver Sun, Feb 3, 2005 article: "When Life Loses All Meaning"

The first Freddi Ford Award

by Cindi Johnson Turner

I'd like to begin by telling you a little about my mum, Freddi Ford. In 1976, my sister shot herself in the basement of our house. She was 17. Like so many families who undergo this kind of tragedy and loss, we barely made it through ourselves and in many ways, some members of my family have never recovered. My mum however, did recover. Almost 10 years later, in 1985 she was working as a volunteer at TELECARE in Peterborough, a crisis phone centre. The Executive Director of CMHA at the time, Barbara Moffat, approached mum to help initiate the first Survivors of Suicide program at the agency. Mum and Barb co-lead the first group. Over the next 20 years, either individually or together, they gave literally hundreds of talks or workshops on all aspects of suicide prevention, intervention and 'post'-vention, and started groups in other communities. I remember mum talking about the hours of driving that she and

Barb shared together. They did this work so generously—giving of their time, their experience, their skills, and their money.

My mum doing this kind of work and doing it so often amazed me. Not just for the obvious reason—that she was able and strong enough to transform her grief and guilt into the positive healing force of helping other people—that's remarkable, yes, even heroic; but, I was more amazed that every time she went to a family in crisis, she, inevitably, re-lived her daughter's suicide again and again and again. Yet, she continued to do it, year after year. Mum was diagnosed with terminal cancer last year, and it seemed a great tribute to her spirit of survival and generosity that her family and friends set up an endowment fund in her memory. She loved the idea, and it was her wish that the fund aim to help survivors of suicide on the grief journey. Mum called that "from h-o-l-e-s to W-H-O-L-E." The purpose of the award is to motivate, recognize, publicize, and try to grow the survivor support work being carried out by grass roots volunteers and workers in communities across Canada. When mum died last December, family and friends gave what they could to contribute to the Freddi Ford Endowment. The fund will produce an annual award of \$500.00 but, it is my hope that many more will contribute and make it even stronger. This way, special training seminars could be made possible and the fund could subsidize travel to important conferences such as this one for survivors and volunteers.

My heartfelt thanks to CASP and CMHA for their willingness to collaborate, and to jointly be the *home* of this award.

A couple of weeks before mum died, she offered a suggestion as to the first recipient. So, it is with special pride and significance that we offer the first Freddi Ford Award to Barbara Moffat.

Tribute to Sheila Levy

Sheila Levy has been an incredibly active and vital contributor to CASP over the last 12 years. She is a remarkable woman. Her intelligence, tenacity, caring, and generosity with her time and energy has made a huge difference to CASP being able to fulfill its mandate.

Sheila joined the board in 1995 and later became vice president and then President. Under her guidance and great efforts at fundraising she hosted 2 very successful conferences in Iqaluit. These conferences raised over \$12,000 for CASP and each had over 400 attendees.

When the silent auction became an annual fund raising attraction at all our conferences, Sheila became our host. Sheila and her northern friends always bring unique and interesting items to these auctions that raise \$5,000 – \$6,000 every year.

CASP has a small budget, very few expenses and very little revenue, no government funding; only membership fees, profits from conferences and donations to sustain our work. Sheila's efforts through the two conferences and the annual silent auction make a big difference in sustaining CASP.

Sheila also brings experience and dedication to suicide prevention and works tirelessly in her community as a counsellor in a High School supporting students, many who are grieving after a suicide or are suicidal themselves.

In October 2006 Sheila will finish, at least for a while, her work for CASP as a board member. She will be missed. Please join the CASP board in thanking her for all her efforts and encourage her not to forget us because CASP needs people like Sheila.

Book your calendar!

October 1-7, 2006

Face Mental Illness. Mental Illness Awareness Week, the Canadian Alliance On Mental Illness And Mental Health's (CAMIMH's) annual national public education campaign. CAMIMH is the largest and most comprehensive mental health coalition in Canada. It is comprised of associations representing service providers, professionals, clients and their families, patients, and researchers. CASP is a member of CAMIMH. For more information, please visit www.camimh.ca.

October 19-20, 2006

Grief and Loss From a Family Perspective, 26th Annual Dealing With Grief Conference. Keynote speaker: Dr. Janice Nadeau, Carriage House Inn, Calgary, Alberta, Sponsored by: Alberta Funeral Services Association
For information call 403 342-2460

October 25-27, 2006

Complexity of Suicide: Prevention, Intervention and Aftermath, Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP) 2006 National Conference. Toronto, ON. website: www.suicideconference2006.ca
Contact the Continuing Education office, Conference Secretariat. Tel: 416.978.2719 Fax: 416. 946.7028 Toll Free: 1.888.512.8173 in North America, ce.med@utoronto.ca

April 11-14 2007

40 years of Suicide Prevention: Moving Forward with Education and Training, 40th Annual Conference of the AAS. New Orleans, Louisiana
Call for Papers due by October 15, 2006 email: ajkulp@suicidology.org
To submit proposals electronically visit: www.suicidology.org

CASP 06 highlights and keynote speakers

Wednesday, October 25

The Honourable James K. Bartleman, O. Ont, 27th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario: *Resilience and Overcoming the Risk of Suicide*
7-8:00 p.m. - Public Forum

Annette Beautrais, PhD, Principal Investigator, Canterbury Suicide Project, Associate Professor of Psychological Medicine, Christchurch School of Medicine & Health Sciences, University of Otago, Christchurch, New Zealand: *What we know – and do not know – about reducing and preventing suicidal behaviour*

M. David Rudd, PhD, ABP, President, American Association of Suicidology: *Science and suicide prevention: Contributions, challenges and controversies*

Roger S. McIntyre, MD, FRCPC, Head, Mood Psychopharmacology Unit, UHN – Toronto Western Hospital; Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto: *Evaluating Risk for Suicide in the Bipolar Population*

Thursday, October 26

Cornelia Wieman, MD, FRCPC, Co-Director, Indigenous Health Research Development Program, Assistant Professor of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto: *Addressing Suicide in Aboriginal Communities: Advancing the Research Agenda*

Michael Kral, PhD, CPsych, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto: *Indigenizing Suicide Prevention*

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, MD, CCFP, FCFP, Former Minister of State (Public Health), Government of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario

Friday, October 27

Doris Sommer-Rotenberg, Spearheaded the campaign to establish the Arthur Sommer Rotenberg Chair in Suicide Studies: *Opening Remarks*

Paul S. Links, MD, FRCPC, Arthur Sommer Rotenberg Chair in Suicide Studies, St. Michael's Hospital; Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto; President, CASP: *Preaching Best Practice to Prevent Suicide: Who's Listening?*

Yvonne Bergmans, BSW, MSW, RSW, Suicide Intervention Consultant, Suicide Studies Unit with the Arthur Sommer Rotenberg Chair in Suicide Studies, St. Michael's Hospital: *Recovering from Recurrent Suicide Attempts: What does this mean?*

Anne E. Rhodes, PhD, Research Scientist at the Suicide Studies Unit & Centre for Research in Inner City Health, St. Michael's Hospital; Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto; Adjunct Scientist, Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences: *Service Use by the Suicidal: How Might we Intervene?*

Stuart G. Shanker, D. Phil, Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy and Psychology, Director of the Milton and Ethel Harris Research Initiative, York University: *The Roots of Alexythemia*

Reminders:

Wed. Oct 25, 8 pm,

Meet Greet and Survivors in Action
9pm: Candlelight Walk to the Peace Garden in front of Toronto's City Hall.
For survivors events and programs contact member of the CASP Board: Adrian Hill 416.694.8438
adrianhill@sympatico.ca

Fri. Oct 27, 12:30 Lunch – CASP Annual General Meeting