



Survivors Partnership for Research Information Truth and Education on Suicide

President's Message

SPRITES has been making great progress in its journey of development! So much has happened in the last few months. After much toil and a few revisions, Ron Vail has completed the 'Coping After A Suicide' pamphlet. This is a piece that will be made available to different entities, including funeral directors. It contains some useful information and contact information for those who have lost someone to suicide which can be used in the first hours to months later. Thank you, Ron, for all of your work and the great job you did on this project!

Other exciting news is that SPRITES Foundation has applied for and received its "Articles of Incorporation" with the state of PA. This is the first step needed to be achieved on our way to becoming a non-profit organization. The next step is filing an application to register with the PA Bureau of Charitable Organizations (BCO) as a not-for-profit organization. Not-for-profit organizations are required to register with the BCO before they solicit contributions in the state of PA. After we receive this, SPRITES will be able to solicit and accept donations.

And last, but certainly not least in this growing process, the Mission Statement was developed! Each word was carefully thought out and weighed, hoping to convey the spirit of SPRITES. The mission statement is here in this issue of the newsletter, and will continue to be in each issue.

A few new additions to the newsletter have been added, the first is "Survivor's Story". Anyone interested in sharing their story, can do so here. Only one or two short paragraphs are needed. You can read Kathy Fowler's story in this issue. The second is "Creative Corner", where anyone can send in a poem, a short story, ideas or comments on things you have found helpful, or not helpful, in your journey of coping after losing your loved one. You can send your contribution for the "Survivor's Story" and/or "Creative Corner" to me or any board member.

SPRITES is in dire need of a newsletter editor. The job does not require prior experience! The template has been set up, and all that will need to be done is to gather the information from committee chairs and board members to plug in. If you are interested, please contact any board member. We hope to add more features in the future. The editor will pretty much just need to cut and paste into the template, change the date/issue, and fold and mail. Again, no prior experience is needed!

Enjoy the rest of your summer and I hope to see you at a SPRITES meeting and/or event soon.

Take care,
Lynn Fletcher

Survivor's Story

In Loving Memory of my son
Lambert Phillip Hillman
August 26, 1978 – March 16, 1995
by Kathy O'Hern Fowler

It is now 13 ½ years since I suffered the loss of my youngest son to suicide and nothing in my life is the same as it was on that fateful day. For me, losing my child to suicide caused me to re-evaluate my entire life trying to find out where I went wrong with my son. Did I not love him

enough? Did I say the wrong thing? What signs did I miss? The whys, or what could have been, or what should have been, literally were eating through my very existence. All of the above unanswered questions were destroying me inside. Because my child died by suicide it was causing me to look at his entire life and my entire life so differently. It had me believing that I had done everything in my life and my son's life wrong. The suicide that had destroyed my son was also destroying me. That was me in those first few difficult years.

Fortunately for me, I had very good people come into my life that guided me on the path to understanding and to the eventual acceptance of my son's death to the illness of suicide. I cannot continue without recognizing these individuals and groups: The Compassionate Friends and Betty Robson, Sue Wesner and the SOS Group and YES ALL OF YOU THAT ARE READING THIS TODAY!!! Some of you walked this path before me and guided me, some of you walked this path with me, and some of you are giving me a chance and a reason to see life as I never thought possible. You are giving me a chance to offer compassion and hope to those suffering the loss of loved one to this terminal illness of suicide.

Especially through Sue Wesner and the SOS group I was given the knowledge to understand the brain as the organ it is. I was able to understand the suicide. Just as we lose a loved one to the illness of heart disease and cancer, the illness of suicide also takes lives. Suicide is not something we caused or our loved ones caused. Once I understood the illness of suicide then I could truly grieve the loss of my wonderful son. Unfortunately for most of us a death by suicide adds layers to our grief.

After 13 ½ years, the illness of suicide plays a very little part in the wonderful memories of my son Lambert. I am not left with that harsh remembrance of how my son died, but rather how my son lived. Because I understand the illness of suicide I am left with the wonderful memories of a terrific life that we shared. I no longer look at my life as having done everything wrong, rather now I look at my life and I am so THANKFUL and GRATEFUL for the wonderful and yes sometimes adventurous 16 years that I spent with my son, Lambert. After years of

struggles, questions and finally acceptance of the illness of suicide, I can say that I have found my "Safe Place" where my son lives in me forever. This I wish for all of you!!! As you struggle when you are so new in your loss and for those of us that it has been years and yet we still have those "difficult days" my wish is that your loved one always returns to their "Safe Place" in you. The place where you feel their ongoing love forever!!!!

For me, Lambert's compassion and his love continues to live within me everyday of my life as all of us try to find answers to the terminal illness of suicide. My heart tells me that my son, along with your loved ones would want us to do nothing less!

This is a few lines of a song from The Lion King on Broadway that Lambert loved so dearly. These words give me strength and I hope they can do the same for you as you think of your loved one:

Wait, there's no mountain too great; Hear
the words and have faith; have faith;
He lives in you; He lives in me; He
watches over everything we see;
Into the water; into the truth; In your
reflection; he lives in you!

To My Son: "Never had I imagined living one day without you. But as the lyrics state "You live in me and you watch over everything I see", you give me strength, guidance, and most of all HOPE that someday we will make a difference in all lives that are touched by the terminal illness of suicide.



CREATIVE CORNER

SPRITES Story

Submitted by Lynn Fletcher

Many of you may wonder where the name for this organization, SPRITES, originated. When the first core of this group started to meet around my dining room table, back in November 2006, one of the first things talked about was the need of a name. Some of us around the table offered a

couple of ideas, suggestions of a theme, etc. I shared the story of my Sprite.

My son, Joshua, died on September 9, 2003. A friend of mine who raises golden retrievers had a litter of puppies on September 24th of the same year. When the puppies were 8 weeks old, she asked if I and another breeder would evaluate the girls for the show ring, and she brought along one of the male puppies too. I fell in love with this little boy dog. She called me later that evening to tell me that he had been picked by potential puppy buyers. I told her good thing, because as much as I didn't need another dog right now, I did like him. The very next day she called again to tell me those people had changed their minds, so if I wanted him, I could have him. I told her no, I just could not handle a puppy right now. She told me that she was going to keep him, along with one of his sisters, and show them both. A few days after that phone call, she was diagnosed with cancer, for a third time. She decided to take her son on a long weekend vacation before she started her chemo. Her husband was staying home with the dogs. I however offered to keep the little boy dog, who she had named Rocko, while she was away.

Rocko came into my home on a Tuesday night. By Friday, everyone at work was commenting on seeing me smiling again.....something they had not seen for the three months since Josh had died. I would hold the puppy and ask him if Josh had sent him to me, and whenever I would say that, the puppy would kiss me. Others saw the difference in me; I could feel the difference in me. I have no doubts to this day that Josh indeed sent this puppy to me. And, I knew this puppy was going to stay in my life, in my home.

I wanted to rename him, and had thought about calling him Spirit. Now, this pup was full of 'spirit' and life and a little imp, much like my Josh had been. Sprite comes from the Latin word for Spirit, so, Sprite it was! When my friend returned from her trip and called to see how the puppy

was doing, I told her that 'he was doing great, and that he had a new name and a new home!' She was very happy with both! His "registered" name with the American Kennel Association is Goldenharts Spirits Can Crossover.

When I shared this story, everyone thought SPRITE was a great name. We then started to build around the acronym. There have been several versions, including adding the S at the end to incorporate what SPRITES now stands for: **S**urvivors **P**artnership for **R**esearch **I**nformation **T**ruth and **E**ducation on **S**uicide.

EXPLAINING THE ACRONYM OF SPRITES

Survivors Partnership - Survivors helping survivors

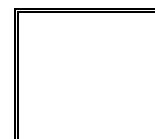
Research - Support research efforts (for example: NAMI Walk, AFSP Walk, etc.)

Information - For survivors (for example - 1st Responders Pamphlet)

Truth - Suicide is a medical condition

Education - Change the stigma associated with **Suicide**

If you have or know someone who has lost a loved one to suicide please join fellow survivors for support, information and assistance in moving forward in the processing of this devastating occurrence. We currently meet at the NAMI Office, located at 105 Braunlich Drive, Suite 200, Pittsburgh, PA 15237 - just off McKnight Road in North Hills (412-366-3788).



Meeting and Events Dates



August 20 - Wednesday	General Meeting 7:00 PM
September 6 - Saturday	AFSP Walk - North Park
September 13 - Saturday	Westmoreland County Walk - Twin Lakes Park
September 18 - Thursday	General Meeting 7:00 PM
October 5 - Sunday	NAMI Walk for Awareness - South Side 9:00AM (SPRITES Team)
November 17 - Monday	General Meeting 7:00 PM
December 10 - Wednesday	Candle Light Memorial - Riverview Presbyterian Church 7:00 PM

Resource Table

Diane Lally is chair of the Resource Table. At meetings and events reprints or copies of articles, recommended book titles, etc. will be available for attendees to take. If you come across an article or book you think others may find interesting and/or helpful, please let Diane know. You can contact her at lallyart@comcost.net

SPRITES Board Members

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Social Events

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Grants

Jan Petro

NAMI Walk

Sue Gorman

Candlelight Memorial

Carol Dzamko

Webmaster

Needed

Resource Table

Diane Lally

Blog Manager

Needed

1st Responder Pamphlet

Ron Vaill

Newsletter Editor

Needed

Mission Statement

The mission of SPRITES Foundation is to provide support to individuals whose lives have been altered by the loss of a loved one to suicide, to instill a spirit of compassionate involvement with integrity, perseverance, determination, and knowledge through courtesy, respect, and leadership. SPRITES is also committed to reducing the stigma associated with suicide through supporting education of the general public about brain illnesses.

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