

SSAVE—news

The newsletter of the SSAVE coalition



SAN LUIS VALLEY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

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SSAVE Coalition meets monthly



The SSAVE COALITION (Suicide, substance abuse, and, violence education) is a coalition of representatives from various community organizations whose mission is to work towards improving the quality of life for people of the San Luis Valley by providing community-based support in suicide, substance abuse and violence prevention.

The coalition's efforts include community education, advocacy, dialogue, and prevention/ intervention strategies through cooperation among community organizations, agencies, youth, surviving family members, schools and churches.

Agencies involved in the coalition are:

- Alamosa County Nursing,
- La Gente
- Alamosa BOCES,
- Private Probation,
- Sacred Heart Church,
- Kathy and Greg Van Gieson Parents (who lost a son to suicide),
- Adams State College,
- Department of Social Services,
- SLVMH Domestic Violence Program,
- SLV Anti-Violence Coalition,
- SLV Emergency Services Program,
- SLV Addictions Recovery Center,
- Youth from Centennial High School (San Luis) sub-coalition (SLYCE),
- Alamosa High School sub-coalition (SEADS: Students Educating Against Drugs & Suicide),
- Monte Vista High School sub-coalition: Understanding Suicide (US).
- Centauri High School is looking into how they can start up more Suicide Prevention work

Goals are to lower the stigma and lack of public awareness of suicide, improve services, increase funding and access of appropriate and comprehensive services for those in need through prevention and education.

Future issues

- JULY/AUGUST THE NEWSLETTER WILL HIGHLIGHT MONTE VISTA'S COALITION "US"
- SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER NEWSLETTER WILL LOOK AT SLYCE, THE COALITION IN SAN LUIS
- NOVEMBER/DECEMBER NEWSLETTER WILL EXPLORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONEJOS COUNTY COALITION.

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AHS students launched SEADS coalition

Students at Alamosa High School introduced the SEADS coalition with the help of SSAVE members from the SLV Mental Health Center on October 20, 2002.

Our goal was to prevent suicide in our community—especially regarding our youth.

The death of Caleb Stong,

a friend of many students, generated discussion about having such a coalition.

Only days later, the death of Shea VanGieson sparked more and more students to get involved and help such a horrible tragedy from happening to any more of our classmates.

Initially announced by word of mouth, at SSAVE

meetings, school newspaper and in the Moose Tracks, the first meeting on October 20, 2002 started with 30 students who were eager to help the community.

Students continue to develop their leadership qualities as a result of encouraging other schools in their suicide prevention.

SEADS (Students Educating Against Drugs & Suicide) generate funds and awareness

Since the beginning, SEADS has presented to

- eight classes at Ortega Middle School,
- four health classes at Alamosa High School,
- Centauri High School Peer Mediators,
- at the National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide Conference and

- at the Colorado 2003 Suicide Prevention Summit “Wings of Hope.”

Fundraising efforts in the form of t-shirt sales, Pizza Hut Fundraising Night, bake sales and grant applications have been done to create more opportunity to attend conferences, trainings, distribute educational materials and increase visibility.

SEADS future plans are to increase awareness of student suicide prevention activities

by creating a SEADS web page, set up an anonymous box in the counselor’s office that students can access; have an email address (monitored by SEADS members and the counselor) for students to write in with questions and concerns; set up literature racks with brochures and reference books in the counselor’s office; and increase presentations and trainings to other schools, school boards, staff and administrations and to service organizations.



By Kathy Van Giesen
Administrative Assistant,
SyCare
A Survivor of Suicide
Member, SSAVE
Member, Alamosa Community
Coalition, Drug Free
Community



By MaryLou Rodriguez
Junior at AHS

A personal story of reaching out, listening, helping

There I was, talking to this young man that was hopelessly grasping onto the words I placed in his mind.

Only a few minutes before I was laughing, talking to my friends, not even thinking I’d ever be in such a personal conversation with a stranger. Yet I was.

This boy, not even in high

school yet, had problems I didn’t even know existed. He told me the story of his life. It was sad, yet motivating. He said to me that his parents tried many different things to help him, but to his, and my dismay, nothing seemed to be working.

Then I heard the most terrifying words I ever thought I’d hear out of his mouth. He

asked me to help him. I was scared, I mean this was the first time anyone had ever personally reached out to me, but I offered him the most promising words of encouragement I could.

See—personal story continued at top of page 3

Personal story

Continued from page 2

I pulled resources out of anything I could think of and I even offered myself as a comfort measure.

I told this boy that I cared about him and his future, and that I knew he'd be something great when time was ready for him.

He thanked me for caring so much for him, but it was just so natural for me. I really wanted this boy to live, and he understood the words I wasn't saying to him.

He hasn't called me since, so something I said to him that night must have gotten through.

I'm happy I haven't gotten any crisis calls from him, but I can't help but wonder what he's doing these days.

Even though it was the hardest thing I've dealt with to this point, I'm thankful to that boy for the confidence he gave me in knowing that I can make a difference.

I told this boy that I cared about him and his future, and that I knew he'd be something great when time was ready for him.

— MaryLou Rodriguez

SEADS—plugged into the plan with goals

Members of the Alamosa High School coalition SEADS, developed a plan that they have been sharing with the public.

In exploring their approach to the plan, the students discovered even more about the scope of the problem in the United States.

Every 17 minutes someone commits suicide—unexpected but yet preventable. Sometimes suicide appears as a way to escape great mental anguish and an overwhelming sense of hopelessness.

Statistics on suicide are sober-

ing.

Some 30,000 people commit suicide each year in the US—11 in every 100,000 Americans or 1 person every 17 minutes.

In 1998, the suicide death rate in Colorado was more than 14 people per 100,000, making Colorado's rate the 12th highest in the country—36% higher than the national average.

SEADS members agreed to three goals:

1. Raise community awareness by providing community-specific training/public awareness programs based

on research-based effective suicide prevention principles throughout the Valley

2. Continue to build and support the SEADS coalition to increase awareness and education projects that work with students, staff and parents.
3. Work with the Valley-wide coalition—SSAVE—to develop an evaluation system for tracking measurable outcomes from service delivery programs with direct feedback to the community for continuous improvement in management, evaluation and provision of services.

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Yellow Ribbon linked to son's love of '68 mustang

The Yellow Ribbon program was founded in 1994 by the parents of a bright, funny, loving teen, Mike

Emme, who took his life when he did not know the words to say, or how to let someone know he was in trouble and needed help.

"Don't blame yourselves, Mom and Dad, I love you." It was signed, "Love Mike 11:45pm". In a move that totally stunned all who know him, Mike shot himself at a time of deepest despair. At 11:52pm his parents pulled into the driveway behind that bright yellow Mustang, - seven minutes too late!

The legacy started

when Mike rescued a 1968 Ford Mustang from a field where it had sat neglected. He bought it, rebuilt it and painted it bright yellow. As Mike and his mustang became more and more active helping other teens and friends - giving them rides to and from school and work he became known as "Mustang Mike".

That day as teens gathered to comfort the family, and each other, they discussed the tragedy of losing Mike. They talked about mementos that others could have to remember him with, and decided that yellow would be used in honor of the cherished yellow mustang. That's how the yellow-ribbon card came about.

In response to teens asking what can we do?, - she told them,

'don't do this, don't attempt suicide'. 'If you are ever at this point of despair, please ask for help!' Kids took notes! Cards were made with the message to reach out for help, to never commit suicide, that *It's OK to Ask4Help!*

Teens soon began to call and write, asking for 'those yellow ribbon cards', 'I want to give them to my best friend in case he/she would ever be in trouble and need help'.

The ribbon became the symbol of the program when the teens began tying them in their hair and pinning them to their clothes on the day Mike died.

Yellow was in memory of his cherished '68 Yellow Mustang.

Visit: www.yellowribbon.org/Legacy.html



Get help by phone:

1-800-suicide
(1-800-784-2433)

SSAVE Coalition Minutes for Friday, May 14, 2004



Present: Teri McCartney, Ian Fetyko, Clarissa Woodworth, LeAnn Garcia, Krissianna Garcia, MaryLou Rodriguez, Rachel Koskelin, Priscilla Ortega, Tommy Vigil, Vanessa Capestany, Matthew Martinez, Rick Esquibel, Anna Vargas, Cristina Ruylbal, Stacy Madrid, Janeil Sowards, Mary Trujillo-Young

CALLED TO ORDER: Meeting called to order by Krissianna Garcia at 12:15 pm. Krissianna asked attendees to introduce themselves.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS: Clarissa handed out a copy of the report to be filled out by next January for El Pomar, the sponsor of the **EPYCS grants**. She asked to be thinking of how we will answer these questions.

Clarissa announced that there is money left in the grant from the Office of Suicide Prevention. At this time, she is going to order supplies for ASIST and Yellow Ribbon trainings. ASIST will need 2 easels, 3 flip charts, 2 sets of markers, tape, and tacks. Yellow Ribbon will need stickers, cards, pens and videos. Additionally, \$200.00 will go to each school (SEADS, US, SLYCE, and Centauri).

Clarissa mentioned the prevention grant requests will be coming out in July. This would be approxi-

mately **\$3000.00**.

Clarissa also announced that Cindy Hodge is retiring from the state Office of Suicide Prevention. She will still be involved in suicide prevention in the state, however.

Krissianna reported that SSAVE was given close to \$3000.00 (**approximately \$2800**) in grant money from **El Pomar**.

SCHOOL UPDATES: Several members of the **SLYCE** group were present. They reported that they have been involved in prevention efforts at their school, including the tobacco talks to 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. Additionally, each Friday a speaker is brought in to address **cultural** and **traditional topics** of interest.

Anna Vargas reported that **Centauri** had a **Yellow Ribbon** training for **9** of their **peer mediators**.

MVHS was not present but Rick and Priscilla will be attending the Honors Banquet at MVHS to congratulate seniors involved in **US (Understanding Suicide)**.

SEADS from AHS was again very active this month. They did a presentation for Ms. Goddard to help her understand their purpose in the school. Though not seen as extremely supportive, she did

offer to pay to see how other schools conduct their peer suicide intervention. SEADS members are looking at Arvada West as an option. SEADS members will be setting up an information booth at the freshman orientation. They will be conducting a training at OMS next week. They held a t-shirt fundraiser that netted about \$60.00. They are creating a scrapbook to be kept as a history of SEADS. They will be involved in the Relay Challenge on June 26. SEADS goals include presenting at every school in the Valley next year and to get all four active school clubs involved in fundraising this summer.

TRAINING UPDATES: Teri announced that there will be an ASIST training at ASC for college credit on June 10 & 11 at ASC.

Rick announced that a potential date for a community training is August 18 & 19. This would involve all four trainers.

Janeil, LeAnn, Rick, and Clarissa did a training for the Mental Health staff this past month; it was well-received.

SUMMER PLANNING: Items that came up were:

- A **retreat** (BBQ) for fun
- Possible **fundraisers** (having booths at each community festival)
- **Trainings** for peer mediator
- **Summer meetings**; we will continue meeting monthly
- Our next meeting is **Friday, June 18, at 10:00 am**

CLOSING To close off the meeting, SSAVE recognized the graduating seniors who were in attendance with a small gift of appreciation for all the hard work they have put into SSAVE.

ADJOURNED: Meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.



RICK ESQUIBEL ANNOUNCED THAT A POTENTIAL DATE FOR A COMMUNITY ASIST TRAINING IS AUGUST 18 & 19. THIS WOULD INVOLVE ALL FOUR TRAINERS.



Yellow Ribbon training is a way to help others.

SAN LUIS VALLEY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

A message from Dale and Dar Emme, Mike's parents

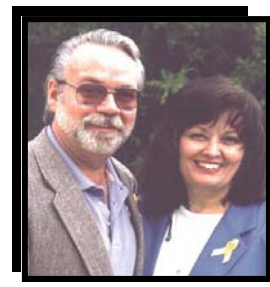
8745 CR 9 South
Alamosa, CO 81101
719-589-3671

We're on the web at
<http://www.slvmmc.org>

We truly believe the words on the front of the card that we said to those first teens were divinely inspired. We are even more convinced that this program is all divinely inspired by the fact that over 2,500 precious youth lives have been saved through this program.

We aren't the first, nor the only, parents who have said, or are saying these words...but kids heard them and now are hearing them We agree with the saying from our ancestors: "It takes a village to raise a child"..... we add: "It takes a village to save a child".

We are asking you to help! Please put the Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program® into your life - spread the word, distribute the cards, wear a Yellow Ribbon, start the program in your community-school-work-church-LIFE, reach out to youth and **let them know you care.** Visit: www.yellowribbon.org



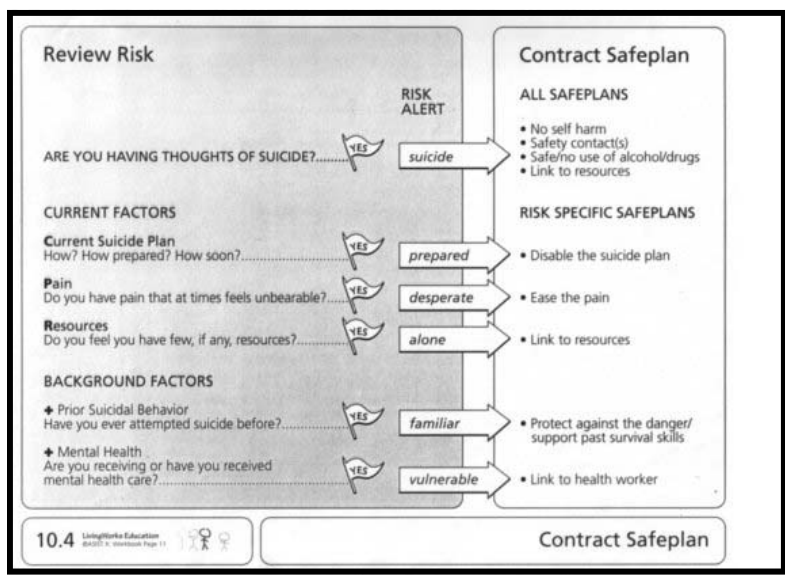

THIS RIBBON IS A LIFELINE!
It carries the message that there are those who care and will help! If you are in need and don't know how to ask for help, take this card to a counselor, teacher, clergy, doctor, parent or friend and say:
"I NEED TO USE MY YELLOW RIBBON"
The Yellow Ribbon Program is in loving memory of Michael Emme

BE-A-LINK® – SAVE A LIFE!
If you have received this Card, it is a Cry for Help:

- Stay with the person – you are their lifeline!
- Listen, really listen. Take them seriously!
- Get, or call, help immediately!

It's Ok To Ask 4 Help![®]
1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) Hopeline Network
Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program® www.yellowribbon.org

Rick Esquibel is ASIST Trained



Rick Esquibel, counselor at SLV Mental Health Center, is one of only four ASIST trainers in the Valley. ASIST is the acronym for applied suicide intervention skills training presented to over 400,000 caregivers by LivingWorks Education company.



In a May 6 training at the center, he noted that suicide prevention counselors need to expect the unexpected. Emotions run high and the emergency on-call person needs to respond quickly and genuinely. Asking "What's your name?" can keep the conversation rolling until the situation is assessed. He shared a "Contract Safeplan."

The question, "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" with an affirmative answer is a risk alert for suicide. A "Contract Safeplan" should include statements of "no self harm," "safety contact," "Safe/no use of alcohol or drugs," and links to resources.

Visit www.LivingWorks.net for more information or call Rick for some help at 587-6988.