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Special points of interest:

- 2011 Walk draws 1900 walkers
- New Coordinator
- More prevention training available
- Connecting with the medical community
- Initiative to educate local employers and workforces
- iMatter Festival

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Suicide Prevention News

Walk A Mile In My Shoes

Another Incredible Year of Prevention In Chemung County!



1900 walkers turned out this year for the sixth annual suicide prevention walk. Our biggest walk yet!

2011 has proven to be a year of continued growth in Chemung County's ongoing effort to promote a suicide safer community. Not only has the annual Walk A Mile In My Shoes prevention walk drawn even more walkers this year than any previous year, but even more determined efforts have been made to provide awareness and intervention training throughout our community. Many of the

ongoing and new initiatives to promote suicide prevention in Chemung County and neighboring communities are outlined later in this newsletter. Read on to see all that is happening to keep Chemung County in the lead as one of the most progressive counties in all of New York State when it comes to creating awareness about one of our nations most important public health issues; SUICIDE. Chemung County leads the way in our state with regard to suicide prevention and also post-vention (helping persons who have either survived a suicide attempt or any person who has been impacted by the death of someone who has died due to suicide). Director of Community Services, Brian Hart has commented on Chemung County's leadership role in the state: "On nearly a weekly basis I receive calls from my counterparts in the state asking about what we are doing in Chemung County regarding suicide prevention. The word has gotten out that our county is progressive and determined to keep working towards eliminating suicide in our community. Leadership elsewhere in the state, and even from other states, have called asking for direction. We are excited to share what we have done with others in order to keep moving towards communities without suicide." Yes, it is true! Chemung County is leading the way. Thanks to the many concerned citizens, employers, volunteers and professionals dedicated to suicide prevention, our community is becoming "suicide aware" and "suicide safer".

New Prevention Coordinator Hired

In late 2010, Patrick Mitchell was hired by the County to fill the Prevention Coordinator position. Patrick has worked in the mental health field for over 20 years. He has served as an officer in the United States Air Force and has worked extensively in private counseling practice.

Patrick is working hard to carry on the great suicide prevention tradition in Chemung County. He has put special emphasis on expanding prevention training throughout the community through programs such as safeTALK and ASIST. He is currently working hard to build

collaborations with local employers, schools, medical practitioners and faith-based organizations to increase awareness about suicide and promote education about suicide prevention. "This is about saving lives together and has become part of the culture of our community."

2011 Walk Draws over 1900 Participants

On May 7th, 2011, Eldridge Park was swarming with bright orange t-shirts. Over 1900 people came out to participate in the annual Walk A Mile In My Shoes prevention walk. The walk has grown every year, from 500 walkers the first year to this year's total. Men, women, children and pets all gathered to show their commitment to eliminate suicide from our community and to remember those who have died due to suicide. Although a serious and somber issue, the walkers at this year's event were clearly excited to be out and walking for this important cause. One walker commented "I have been here every year now and I'm going to be here every year until I can't walk. You just have to be here and feel the energy and you know that it's not just another walk. We are doing something really amazing here." This was the sentiment throughout the crowd of walkers which left even the newspaper and television reporters rather amazed as well. One newspaper reporter commented, "I have never been to this walk before. . . I had no idea it was so big. The feeling here is incredible." And incredible it was! As the only source of fundraising for suicide prevention in the county, this year's walk once again raised nearly \$30,000. All of these funds are put directly back into the



form of prevention efforts in our schools, businesses, professional organizations, medical organizations and anywhere else there is an interest in promoting or learning about how to save lives through suicide prevention. The Walk is growing every year and our community is standing stronger in the fight to save lives. An impressive demonstration of community in Chemung County.



The Horseheads locations of Arnot Medical Services (Above) and Guthrie Outpatient Clinic (Below) were both visited in 2011 during a suicide prevention and awareness and training initiative

Reaching The Medical Community

One of the major prevention initiatives during 2011 was to reach out to the local medical community in an effort to increase primary care physician and staff awareness of the numerous prevention resources available to them in Chemung county. This initiative was and remains vital as recent statistics indicated the 16- 20% of persons who commit suicide visited their primary care doctor within one week of their death. Tremendous progress was made addressing this staggering statistic as the Prevention Coordinator with the help of Dr. Brian Cassetta, visited numerous Arnot Health and Guthrie primary care practices. At each site, physicians and staff were shown the annual Walk A Mile In My Shoes video in order to raise awareness and participation in the annual walk fundraiser. Perhaps even more importantly, physicians and staff were introduced to the several levels of suicide prevention training available to them through the Chemung County Department of Mental Hygiene. At each location, funds generated from The Walk allowed for the physicians and staff to view multimedia presentations explaining the history of prevention in Chemung County as well as discussing prevention training and resources available to all office staff. Not only were these visits groundbreaking in the sense that this message was for the first time taken directly to the medical community, but the visits also generated considerable interest at each location for staff training. To date, several medical staff have attended safeTALK trainings and on-site trainings are being planned to take place at some of the medical offices visited. In every case, all staff that participated were very responsive and motivated to improve their ability and confidence to deal with patients that present to their offices with thoughts of suicide or are at immediate risk of suicide.

Suicide Prevention News Continues. . .

County Expands Prevention Training

2011 also saw the addition of several additional safeTALK trainers added to our team of volunteer workshop instructors. Specifically, five more safeTALK trainers have joined our prevention team. These additions allow for many more trainings to be held throughout the year and to more easily meet the demand for trainings not on the normal training schedule offered through the county. Additional trainers will make it much more feasible to bring prevention education and training to local employers and other groups interested in strengthening Chemung County's role as the most progressive prevention county in the state.

Please welcome:

- Karen Aikman VA
- Marybeth Gillis Elmira College
- Kate Morrissey-Burch EPC
- Nykole Parks St. Joseph Mercy Hospital
- Colin Rickenback Glove House

The County would also like to thank Living Works Inc., the developers of safeTALK and ASIST for granting our Prevention Coordinator a scholarship to become an ASIST trainer for the County. Patrick traveled to Medford, Oregon for this intensive five day training and is eager to provide this intensive suicide prevention training for all those who are interested. "This was by far the best and most intensive training of any kind I have had in over 25 years as a clinician. I am profoundly grateful." Apparently the training was so intensive that Patrick commented "As far as I know, Oregon looks like the inside of a Ramada Inn. Wow did they work us hard. The take off and landing at the Medford Airport was incredibly beautiful though." Watch the Walk A Mile In My Shoes website for safeTALK and ASIST training dates and times. A new hour-long awareness workshop, suicideTALK will be available soon also as a very basic introduction to suicide awareness and prevention.



Twin Tiers Idol winner Joanna Yeager performs the National Anthem at this year's walk. An amazing performance. Thanks Joanna!!



What an amazing day at Eldridge Park for our annual prevention walk. Everyone joined in the fun and got a t-shirt too! In addition to the 1900 two-legged walkers, many four-legged friends came out to show their support and have plenty of fun! Dogs of every shape size and breed joined their owners in an enthusiastic show of support for eliminating suicide in our community.

Prevention Continues in

Suicide prevention education continues in all of our Chemung County Middle and High Schools. Signs of Suicide, one of the only evidenced-based suicide prevention school curriculums and also recognized by SAMHSA remains one of the foundations for educating our local youth about the prevalence and prevention of youth suicide. Health instructors in the middle schools and high schools provide this education every year to students. This year, the high school curriculum has been revised and the County purchased additional units to provide the schools. The developer of Signs of Suicide has indicated that an updated middle school version is in development and may be available next year. Regardless, the children in our schools are receiving the best suicide prevention education that could be found. Both the children and instructors favor this material very much. Also, Sources of Strength continues to be used in all the high schools. This program is a peer-based suicide prevention program that helps to develop and promote a culture of caring and awareness among students in an effort to keep each other safe. Peer leaders learn to lead groups of students throughout the year in the practice of promoting communication about suicide, identifying trusted adults to speak with when in need and in general to promote a climate of respect and caring for one another. This program was developed by the University of Rochester and is closely mentored and monitored by school staff and program developers. This program is rapidly being implemented across the country by many other schools. Chemung County schools piloted this amazing program over the past two years!

Suicide Prevention News Continues . . .

Moving Awareness and Prevention In- to The Workplace

2011 has also marked an increased effort to meet with local employers and businesses about suicide awareness and prevention. Earlier in the year, the Prevention Coordinator was able to sit down with human resources directors at Kennedy Valve, Seneca Beverage and Corning Incorporated among other businesses to discuss the importance of not only supporting local prevention efforts financially but also how to bring awareness and prevention training directly into the workplace. Efforts continue to do on-site trainings with local businesses and employers. As a result of these meetings many more people were made aware of the annual Walk and attended in a show of support. The coming months will be focused a good deal on continuing to build relationships with local employers and businesses to not only support prevention efforts but to reach directly into the workforce in order to provide training to employees. Our goal is to bring trainings such as safeTALK, ASIST and the newest training from Living Works, a basic introductory workshop called suicide Talk straight to the workplace. Additionally, Walk A Mile In My Shoes will be hosting a local chamber of commerce Business after Business gathering early in 2012. This will provide further opportunity to meet directly with employers and business owners in our community and expose them to the many suicide prevention resources that are available to them and their employees. Additionally, this is an excellent opportunity to publicize the annual Walk and increase participation and financial support from local business. Many of our local employers have training facilities and have indicated a willingness to support training in their workplaces. 2012 will have a major focus on making trainings in the workplace a reality.

National Suicide Prevention Day Commemorated Through Multiple safeTALK Trainings

On September 14th, 2011, nearly 100 people were provided free suicide prevention awareness training at multiple sites in the city of Elmira. In observance of National Suicide Prevention Week, several volunteer safeTALK trainers conducted morning and afternoon workshops at the Chemung County Human Resources Building, at the Elmira Medical Arts Center and also at the Bath VA. Participants included persons who have suffered the loss of someone to suicide, local professionals, and many others who were interested in learning more about how to be "suicide alert" and more prepared to identify and help connect persons with thoughts of suicide to appropriate care. These trainings were especially meaningful this year as several attendees passed the word forward to people in leadership positions at their places of employment and throughout the faith-based community. As a result, several requests have been made to have safeTALK presented at local places of employment at also at local churches. This is very exciting news as moving the suicide prevention message and training into our local places of employment and worship has been a major goal in the County's overall prevention plan.



Brian Hart, Director of Community Services for Chemung County, speaks to over 1900 assembled walkers prior to starting the walk. Brian thanked the walkers and volunteers for their amazing support this year and in years past, making our county's prevention/fundraising event the largest of it's kind in the region. Shortly after this photo Brian officially opened the Walk releasing a mass of orange-clad walkers, pets and balloons to circle Eldridge Park.



**Thank you to the Star Gazette For
Providing Photographs of This Year's
Walk A Mile In My Shoes Annual
Suicide Prevention Walk**

**Many Thanks to the Eldridge Park
Historical Society for it's ongoing
support of suicide prevention in our
community. Without Eldridge Park this
event simply would not be the same.
Thank You!**

Suicide Prevention News Continues. . .

Second Annual National Survivor's Day Observance and Gathering November 19th

National Survivors of Suicide Day is recognized each year on November 19th. This is a day of remembrance, reflection, support and companionship for many thousands of people who have suffered the loss of someone due to death by suicide. Approximately 35,000 people take their own lives each year in this country. When one considers the numbers of people impacted by simply one death by suicide, it becomes quite clear how significant the number is nationally of people who are struggling with the death of someone they cared about or simply knew by suicide. People all across the country and all over the world are suffering the unique grief and loss due to suicide; one of the world's leading public health issues.

For this reason, the Walk A Mile In My Shoes Committee and Chemung County Department of Mental Hygiene are sponsoring the second annual Survivors of Suicide Day gathering on Saturday, November 19th from 10:30 AM to 3:00 PM at the North Presbyterian Church in Elmira.

Attendees will be able to hear a local panel speak and answer questions. This panel will be made up of local survivors and helping professionals. Additionally, there will be a viewing of a similar national discussion panel which is provided by the Association for the Prevention of Suicide. Lunch will be provided to all attendees who register for the event. A voluntary candlelight remembrance ceremony will conclude the event. Many helping professionals from the area will be in attendance to answer questions and provide support. Registrations for this important event may be done by contacting Patrick Mitchell at pmitchell@co.chemung.ny.us or by phone at 607-737-2052. Information is also available on the Walk A Mile website at www.walkamile.net.



"Before today, I didn't realize that there are others out there who feel exactly the way I feel."

- Survivor from Alberta, Canada

You are not alone



Before, during and after the walk good will and smiles ruled the day! Walkers strolled and chatted and had a great time supporting a worthy cause. What a great day!

The Growing Website: Walkamile.net

With the help of our very patient web-designer, Julie Burgess, the Walkamile.net website continues to grow and expand its functionality. Specifically, we are continually striving to add more content to the website to help persons interested in learning about suicide prevention or who may be in need of help due to having thoughts of suicide. Schedules of upcoming prevention and awareness trainings can be found at the website at [Training and Events](#). We are compiling useful articles on numerous prevention related subjects and for various age and demographic groups. Articles can be accessed at [Electronic Articles](#). On the home page of the website one can find a compelling [video](#) of last year's walk as well as connect to an audio file called [The Terry Wise Story: A Suicide Attempt Survivor](#). Also a free e-book is available called [Suicide the Forever Decision, For those Thinking about Suicide and for Those who Know, Love and Counsel Them](#), by Paul Quinnett, Ph.D. Take time to look over the growing content of our website and be sure to pass it along to someone you care about. Our growing dependence on the internet requires that resources like Walkamile.net are available to those in need. Spread the word.



Organizations Already Committed To safeTALK Training

ARC of Chemung
Arnot Ogden School of Nursing
Chemung County Department of Social Services
Children's Advocacy Center
Children's Integrated Services
Corning Incorporated
Elmira City School District
Glove House
HIS Tabernacle Church
Lake Street Presbyterian Church
Pathways
Rape Crisis of the Southern Tier
Sothern Tier Hospice and Palliative Care

Helping To Make A Suicide Safer Community!

iMatter Foundation and Festival Keep on Growing!!!!



One of many performers at this year's iMatter festival held at Eldridge park connects and communicates to local youth through music about the value of life and creating a culture of hope. iMatter remains one of Walk A Mile In My Shoes greatest partners and supporters. Note the mission and vision statements to the left and it is apparent why this partnership is strong and keeping Chemung County in the lead as the most progressive suicide prevention county in the state!

iMatter Mission

iMatter seeks to Create a culture of acceptance that uncovers value, discovers purpose, and reveals hope to a uniquely created generation.

iMatter Vision:

iMatter is working toward eradicating suicide and the culture of death that has plagued our area of Upstate New York, and the world. The organization hopes to help people understand that our best defense against suicide and self-injury is each other.

People are less likely to have thoughts of suicide or self-injure if they know that they are not alone. iMatter is working to create a community that is aware of the threats of suicidal ideations and knows how to fight them.

iMatter in its simplest form seeks to teach others that they are valuable and have a purpose in this life. This then causes a ripple effect where people look out for each other and build strength together.

Our main goal is to take suicide out of the vocabulary.

www.imatterfest.org

Suicide: More Common Than You Think. . . More Preventable Than You Know

**WITHOUT THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF OUR SPONSORS AND VOLUNTEERS
THE CONTINUED GROWTH AND SUCCESS OF PREVENTION EFFORTS IN OUR**

Sponsors and Donors	Volunteers	
Eldridge Park Carousel Preservation Society	Megan Hartzel	Lauren Strait
Ageless Integrative Medical Spa	Christy Edkin	Christie Speciale
Ashley Furniture and Home Store	Marybeth Gillis	Karen Aikman
Bon Ton	Marylee Dillon	Dr. Brian Cassetta
Cozy Corners	Lori Adrienne	David Adrienne
Culligan Water	Ken Wood	Bonnie Wood
Curly's Chicken House	Mindy Gaieski	Joe Gaieski
Doves Auto	Laurie Wert	Lisa Carroll
Gino's Pizzeria	Bruce Sharp	Bob Sinsabaugh
Healing Touch	Johann Vero	Naomi Harmon
Family Video	Jackie Bordoni	Carlee Peterson
Friendly's Arnot Mall	Tessa Boehlert	Rebecca Ossont
Jubilee Foods	Krista Snyder	Krista Dining
Lights Bakery	Desiree Gray	Katie Kerr
Lindenwald House	Danielle Corjulo	Kelli Hadley
New York Sports and Fitness	Ashley Hemphill	Whitney Andrews
Old Country Buffet	BOCES	
Pietro and Sons	Elmira Heights School Students and Staff	
Rays Jeweler	Elmira Free Academy Students and Staff	
Sweet and Saucey	Elmira College School of Nursing Students	
Tanning Bed	Elmira Psychiatric Center Staff	
The Christmas House	Glad Tidings Christian Life Church	
Vincenzo's Pizzeria	His Tabernacle Family Church	
Wegmans		
Weis		
Yesterdays		