

Newsletter

August 2014



From the Executive Director's Desk

Making the connection, the theme for this year's World Suicide Prevention Day, has been the guiding principle for Distress Centres since receiving its first call on November 1, 1967. In 2014, we will once again be providing suicide prevention leadership in Toronto by recognizing both this day on September 10th, as well as National Survivors Day on November 21st. As the renowned clinician Earl Grollman has stated, "anything that is mentionable is manageable". We know that having access to timely support can truly make a life-sustaining difference. And, during this past year, we've been working in the community ensuring that we continue to enhance the impact of our services. Our new website has created increased awareness and dialogue amongst all of our stakeholders. And, the innovative Suicide E-Resource Centre is regularly being used for up-to-date information and the identification of community resources.

In addition to the much-needed support offered through our 408-HELP Line, we have been successful in designing new service channels to address the specific needs of identified target populations. The Caller Reassurance Program for Seniors has successfully used call-outs as a way of meeting the needs of our elderly citizens who have demonstrated a greater degree of reluctance in initiating contacts with the helpline. And, we are looking forward to the launch of our new online program late this year/early next year, which we anticipate will address the service gap for young adults.

It is through community partnership that we are able to broaden the reach of our support, innovate and implement strategies designed to meet individuals in crisis, where they are at, and to support their resiliency. In late March, we were pleased to

formalize a partnership with St. Elizabeth's crisis services, providing after-hours helpline coverage for them in exchange for training and enhanced access. All of our programs, in fact, benefit from our community outreach activities. Distress Centres continues to support neighbourhood capacity building and the coordination of services provided by community-based networks. Our participation has meant increased education opportunities, referrals to our programs, diverse and inclusive volunteer recruitment and the creation of a true 360 feedback loop.

Distress Centres' commitment to providing effective support as efficiently as possible has once again been recognized by Charity Intelligence Canada. Selected as a "Top Pick" for the last two years, we are delighted to announce that we have been awarded its highest 4-Star rating for 2014. In their press release, they wrote "Charity Intelligence's research has found charities that are exceptional. This list of 4-star charities shows Canadians 72 charities that excel in accountability to donors, financial transparency and cost-efficiency. We hope Charity Intelligence's ratings help donors get accurate, independent information in making important giving decisions." Kate Bahen, Managing Director of Charity Intelligence.

When there's a life on the line....so are we!

Karen Letofsky, C.M.





Thanks to a demonstration model grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, in addition to donations from the Intact Foundation, the Rotary Club of Toronto, the Tippet Foundation, and The St. Andrews Charitable Foundation amongst others, Distress Centres is pleased to be able to announce the late 2014 launch of an integrated Ontario online crisis support program. While creating a new, accessible “helpline” available to everyone, we are responding to the identified needs of the in-between generation, too old for children’s services and feeling marginalized from adult-oriented resources.

In Canada, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youths. Each year, on average 294 youths die from suicide. Many more attempt suicide. Transition from adolescence into adulthood is a time of dramatic change. Youth face tremendous pressures from competing groups (peers, parents) and expectations (school achievements, future plans). This is also the time when individuals in this age group can experience the onset of serious mental illness, often pre-diagnosis, resulting in behavioural and substance abuse concerns. Young people can often hide and bury their feelings so well that those who are close to them may either be unaware of the cause of their difficulties and/or the peer stigma around suicide that creates barriers preventing youth from reaching out for help.

Despite the growing outcome data demonstrating the positive impact of helpline crisis support, there is an increasing awareness amongst service providers suggesting that older youths (18-30) may feel that there are barriers to accessing current crisis helplines. In response, Distress Centres, along with four other crisis support agencies across Ontario, have partnered to create the first of its kind provincial integrated online crisis chat/text program to better serve this age group.

Distress Centres has a proven track record for serving the community by innovating programs that are delivered through appropriate and responsive communication channels. By meeting those in need, particularly young adults, where they’re at, our online crisis support services will enable the agency to close the gap between demand and services, particularly among older youths who are “caught” between the age-gap continuum of existing crisis lines.

Our 408-HELP Line is the backbone of our essential crisis response services, and will continue to provide a primary access to support. An online service delivery format offers a new way for our organization to interact with our community, solicit feedback and increase awareness of our work. Responding now and building for the future.

The new program is due to launch later this year. We look forward to keeping you up to date with our progress. If you have any questions with regards to how you can support this program, please contact us at 416 598-0292 or through our website at www.torontodistresscentre.com.



Distress Centres recognizes National Survivors of Suicide Day 2013

Esme and Rob Hurst first became aware of Distress Centres and its Survivor Support Program eight years ago when their teenage son, Alex, tragically died by suicide. At the time, they felt alone and unable to talk to each other about their loss. After a recommendation from people close to them, they joined our Survivor Support Program, a service dedicated to supporting those experiencing a loss due to suicide or homicide. Just a few months after losing Alex, Rob and Esme were partnered with two Distress Centres trained volunteers who regularly met with them during the following eight weeks. A lot of their memories from that time are blank due to the distress they were experiencing. Esme does remember wanting to discontinue after one session as it was too emotional for her. But, coaxed by her husband and with the support of the experienced volunteers, they both finished their personalized sessions. Feeling stronger after finding a safe place where they could freely talk with one another, they then went on to attend the group sessions. It was in these meetings that they met other survivors, and realized that they weren’t alone in their suffering. The individual sessions had prepared them to talk openly, and the group sessions helped them to remove themselves from their own grief and empathize

with others going through the same process. Eight years later, Esme and Rob are still close to members from their group sessions, and the volunteers who so skillfully supported them through their most difficult moments. Following the completion of their sessions, they started to think further about the importance of programs like the Survivor Support Program and what they could do to help.

So, Esme and Rob started to give back to the agency that had supported them during the most challenging time in their lives. They began with hosting third party fundraising events, including golf events and an art auction. Raising \$50,000 over a few years, they helped give critical financial support to Distress Centres. But they wanted to give more. After approaching Distress Centres staff, Esme and Rob signed up to become volunteers with the Survivor Support Program. Once again, Esme found herself doubting whether this was something she could do. After completing her training and participating in her first session, she confessed to the Program Manager that she didn’t think she could do it. “You’ll be back” he reassured her. And she did come back.

Rob and Esme have continued to support other families who have lost a loved one to suicide for the past five years, and have helped countless individuals to make sense of what can seem a senseless act. Volunteering allows them to continue to talk about their son and work through their grief. It has brought them closer together and through their passion and dedication, they are providing a great example to their two young daughters who are also looking into volunteering.

The incredible amount of support that they were providing wasn’t enough for Esme and Rob. Esme subsequently joined the Distress Centres Board, and has over time also arranged for thousands of dollars worth of pro-bono printing and design work for the agency. Rob has also volunteered his time for survivors of homicide, and both are ardent supporters of the agency’s B.A.D. (Bikers Against Despair) Ride event. For Distress Centres, this level of dedication is intrinsic to our ability to support the thousands of individuals seeking our help in managing their emotional crises, be it through the Survivor Support Program, our 408-HELP Line, or our other programs. For Esme and Rob, their volunteer work helps to fulfill something that they have come to realize was missing in their lives. Ultimately, they do it for their son Alex, and for all the other sons and daughters who have been lost to suicide.

TESTIMONIAL LETTER

"Well, we have survived over 2 years...we didn't know how we would have the strength or the courage to keep moving forward as a family after Dylan's suicide on January 6, 2012.

Friends, family and church family rallied around us immediately (and they support us still); but the very first place we went for help was The Distress Centre - only a month and a half after Dylan's death. The care, compassion, patience and understanding we received strengthened us one week at a time during those first eight sessions. The two people you chose to companion us were perfect...so gentle and kind. If one of our caregivers had managed to carry on six years after the death of her son, and even be helping others, it meant we would too.

Once we were finished the first eight weeks, we felt like we might float away into "the great grief void" and we were supported further and deeper by sharing with one of your survivor groups just a few months later.

We don't think there is any pain like suicide pain, and we feel that having begun to process it with such a compassionate group of volunteers so early on has been foundational to our moving forward. We believe you kept us from "crashing," and cannot thank you enough for the gift of encouragement given to us through Esme, John, Alex and our group of fellow survivors

Kindest Regards,

Jaime and Cheryl F.

Congratulations to Claire!

When it comes to volunteers, Claire Mazzolin is "the whole package"! A volunteer since April 2011, she embodies the empathetic, non-judgemental approach essential to helping callers feel understood and valued. Claire also has a gift for making callers feel that she is giving them her undivided attention and treating them as unique and multifaceted individuals.

In addition to our 408-HELP Line, Claire donates her time to Crisis Link, our suicide prevention partnership with the TTC and Bell. She is also a PARO (Professional Association of Residents of Ontario) volunteer, sharing her exemplary skills with our province's medical students/residents and their family members.

Claire often wakes up before 5 am to do an early morning shift with us, and three hours later, leaves for an eight-hour shift at her job!

As a phone trainer, Claire is valued by staff and new volunteers for her mentoring and support skills. She is also just a great all-round role model!

This year, Claire is one of the recipients of the Distress Centres Ontario Spirit of Volunteerism Award. In her words, "Volunteering at Distress Centres has changed my life. I believe it has made me a better person in both my personal and professional life. I feel extremely blessed and privileged to be able to support others on the helplines, as well as my fellow volunteers."



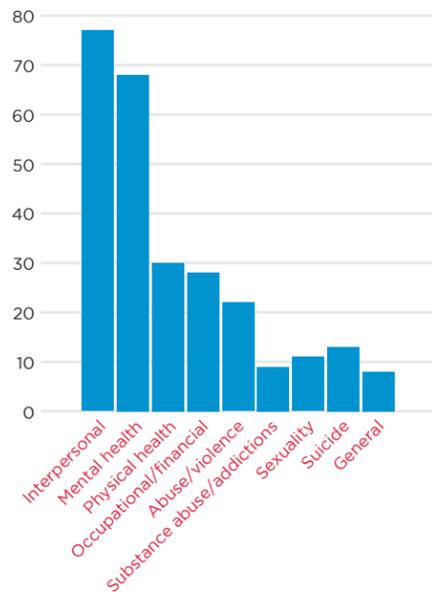
Volunteer Recognition
Claire Mazzolin

COMMUNITY IMPACT

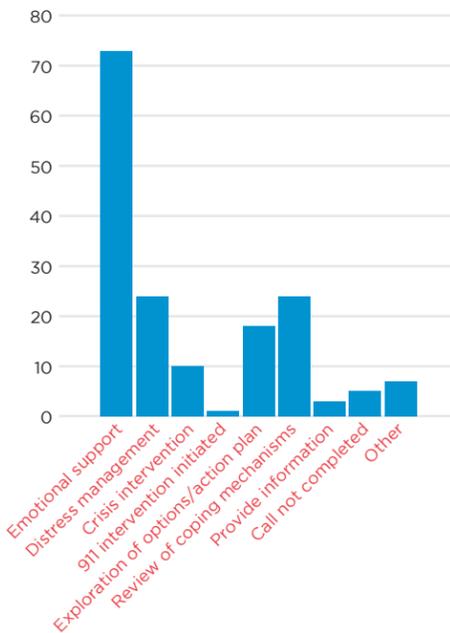
Making a difference one conversation at a time

Caller Concerns

Total percentage of concerns for each category



Helpline Response



Number of volunteers- 600

Number of volunteer hours - 124,800

Number of calls responded to - 78,000

Number of calls placed to seniors through the Caller Reassurance Program CRP - 2,198

Riding to Answer the Call!

There are not too many events where you can chow down on a complimentary, world class Hero burger, hear the sound of more than 1,000 motorcycles starting at once, bid on some amazing silent auction items, pet a baby alligator and have a fantastic time all in aid of a crucial cause. But on May 25th, more than 1,200 supporters and friends of Distress Centres did just that at the 17th annual B.A.D (Bikers Against Despair) Ride. Starting at Dave & Busters before heading out to Jackson's Point, and then finishing at Markham Fairgrounds, our riders, along with celebrity endorsers Chef Marc Thuet, Q107's Andy Frost, comedian Mike Bullard, CTV's weatherman Tom Brown and Country Radio morning show hosts Bill and Melissa, enjoyed a gorgeous day full of sun and fun! The highlight of the day was the draw for our grand prize, a 2014 Harley-Davidson Fat Bob, which was won by Cheryl Geller. Congratulations Cheryl!!

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors and participants, almost \$200,000 was raised for the programs of Distress Centres. Special thanks are due to our three highest fundraisers: Mark and Rebecca Ludwig, Bob Redinger and Rene Galipeau who once again helped to ensure that the ride met its fundraising target. We thank you for your continued dedication to your community!

This Ride could not happen without the annual commitment of all of our supporters, many of whom have supported this event for the past 17 years. Thank you one and all. You have enabled us to say to the community that 100% of the monies raised by our riders goes directly into service to others.

And last but not least, a BIG Distress Centres thank you to our hardworking B.A.D Ride Team-the committee spends countless hours ensuring that this event is a fun-filled day for everyone attending. And, to the dozens of volunteers who give up their weekend to make sure that the day runs smoothly. You are the heart and soul of our event, thank you.

P.S. We are already planning for the 18th annual B.A.D Ride on May 31st 2015. Save the date and be sure to join us for another great day in support of our life-sustaining programs.





Karen Letofsky (L), Distress Centres Executive Director accepts the donation from Natasha Denkovski and Tanya Trklja.

First annual Fundraising Cocktail Gala

Another big Distress Centres thank you to Natasha Denkovski for hosting The First Annual Fundraising Cocktail Gala in honour of our Survivor Support Program. With the assistance of her Event Ambassadors who helped to promote this evening, Natasha hosted more than 150 friends and family. They came together at the Arta Gallery in the Distillery District on April 25 to help raise money for and increase awareness of our mission. More than \$5,000 was raised, a fantastic amount for this first time event. Much appreciation to Natasha and her network for this much needed and highly-valued support.

Andrew Ferrone Memorial Golf Tournament

Once again in August 2013, the Ferrone Family generously donated the funds from their annual memorial golf tournament to Distress Centres. As past program participants, they know all too well the importance of providing an emotional lifeline to those left behind in the aftermath of a suicide. Our agency is able to provide a range of services to individuals at risk, pre and post trauma. We are grateful to the continued recognition support that we have received from this tribute event.

"You made me feel like I'm somebody. I needed to talk to somebody and you made me feel better. Thank you for you people that go out of their way to make people feel happy."

"This caller lost everything, his job, his family, his support system, but most of all - his trust in human beings. After talking with us today he said he had gained it back."

"The caller remembered me from last time we spoke and burst into tears. He said he didn't know if he was going to get the chance to talk to me again, but now he has the opportunity to thank me for saving his life last time we talked."

"Whenever my kids have a problem and I am already anxious, I think of how much better I feel after calling Distress Centres. I try to give them the support and understanding volunteers have given me. I think my relationship with my kids, and my life in general, has improved greatly because of Distress Centres volunteers."

"After an hour talking on the phone, the caller said she thinks of Distress Centres as her life-line. We keep her going, keep her sane and help her live day to day."

"Sometimes I call Distress Centres at 3am when I can't sleep and it relieves my pressure and anxiety".

"Bobby was very depressed a few weeks back and was standing on his balcony ready to take his own life but someone at Distress Centres helped him through. He thanked us for saving his life and for always being there for him."

"The volunteer was very empathetic and extremely insightful...I felt fortunate to be talking to someone who understood my perspective and could relate to my experiences, though we came from very different backgrounds. I would like to encourage her to continue the work that she is doing! It is a tremendous gift to have services like this...I would like to thank her and Distress Centres."

We at Distress Centres would like to acknowledge everyone who is engaged with our agency, be it as a service user or through donations of time, money or expertise. As we continue to grow and transition our agency in response to increased and changing needs, your involvement in our process becomes even more important. Please share your story with us, and ensure your voice is heard as we shape the Distress Centres of the future! Visit us at www.torontodistresscentre.com, Community Outreach, Community Feedback, with your comments. At our last Annual General Meeting, held in April, we

solicited your input in our mission statement review process. Inspired by our keynote speaker, the former Ontario Minister of Health and a survivor, George Smitherman, we were reminded of the power of collective voices in changing the social service landscape—not only to respond to crisis, but to prevent it. During the upcoming months, we will be inviting you to participate in a more formal online survey process. We hope that you will.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our agency, we look forward to learning from you!

Distress Centres information

Distress Centres
10 Trinity Square
Toronto, ON M5G 1B1

24 hour Help Line:
416-408-HELP (4357)

Survivor Support Program
Tel: 416-595-1716

Tel: 416-598-0168
Fax: 416-598-2316
Email: info@torontodistresscentre.com
Web: www.torontodistresscentre.com
Twitter: @DC_TO

Charitable Registration No: 10702 1016 RR0001

Upcoming Events

World Suicide Prevention Day
September 10th, 2014

National Survivors of Suicide Day
November 21st, 2014
Attend our flag raising ceremony at City Hall, 12pm on the 21st.

Distress Centres Volunteer Conference Trauma-Informed Care: Fostering Resilience
November 1st, 2014

Distress Centres Ontario Spirit of Volunteerism Awards
October 2nd, 2014

Annual CASP Conference - Virtual
November 19th – 21st, 2014



Foundations

Audrey S. Hellyer Charitable Foundation
Dynamic Charitable Giving
Echo Foundation
E.W Bickle Foundation
F.K. Morrow Foundation
Foundation Alex U. Soyka
Intact Foundation
Jackman Foundation
Pace Family Foundation
St. Andrew's Charitable Foundation
Salesforce.com Foundation
The Andrew Ferrone Memorial Foundation
The Craig Stewart Esplen Family Foundation
The Geoffrey H.Wood Foundation
The Harry E. Foster Charitable Foundation
The Henry White Kinnear Foundation
The McLean Foundation
The Marjorie and Joseph Wright Memorial Foundation
The Morris Justein Family Charitable Foundation
The Murphy Foundation Incorporated
The Nixon Charitable Foundation
The Sharp Foundation
The Toskan Casale Foundation
Toronto Community Foundation

Churches

Asbury and West United Church
Bedford Park United Church Women
Humber Valley United Church Women
Rosedale United Church

Corporations

AutoShare
CIBC Mellon Global Securities Services
E.J Wilson Racing Inc.
Enbridge Gas Distribution
Hydro One Inc.
JTI Macdonald
Ontario Power Generation
RBC Royal Bank
Salesforce.com Foundation
The Economical Mutual Insurance Company

B.A.D Ride Sponsors

Hero Certified Burgers
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Deeley Harley-Davidson Canada
Davies Harley-Davidson
Scotiabank
Petite Thuet
Q107 Classic Rock
Yamaha Canada
North American International Supershow
Toronto Motorcycle Show
The Roaming Coyotes
Suzuki
Hooters Toronto Airport
Ready Honda
Lettieri
Riders Plus Insurance
Artik
Motorcycle Mojo Magazine
Neal Brothers Foods
Jacox Harley-Davidson
Mackie Harley-Davidson
Enbridge
Beard Winter LLP
Markham Fair
Vita Sociale
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