

**MEDIA ADVISORY AND PHOTO OP
INTERVIEW AVAILABILITY**

DISTRESS CENTRES RAISE THE FLAG TO RECOGNIZE SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE

CITY OF TORONTO PROCLAIMS NOVEMBER 22, 2013 AS NATIONAL SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE DAY

Toronto ON – November [18], 2013 – National Survivors of Suicide Day is a time for friends and family of those who have died by suicide to join together for healing and support. On Friday, November 22, the City of Toronto will proclaim November 22, 2013 as “National Survivors of Suicide Day” for survivors of suicide in Toronto as they raise a flag to honour those dealing with the suicide death of a loved one and in support of the services offered by Distress Centres to those impacted by these traumatic losses.

Since 1979, Distress Centres has operated the Survivor Support Program, the first of its kind in Canada, where those who have lost someone to suicide or homicide can join with others to share their stories of grief and survival. Trained and supervised volunteers, survivors and other lay responders combine skills and insights to create a safe, caring environment. It is critical to recognize the impact of suicide on those left behind and the carefully-selected volunteers are prepared to deal with the emotional issues and problems which result in the aftermath of suicide or homicide. In the area of suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention, using survivors’ personal stories of loss help create positive change.

Karen Letofsky, Executive Director of Distress Centres, Angela Edoe, whose son who died by suicide, and Helena Brown, who lost her father to suicide, will be available to discuss how the Survivor Support Program helps those left behind by these tragic deaths and what other resources are available to help those who feel they are suffering alone.

What: DISTRESS CENTRES HONOURS NATIONAL SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE DAY

When: Friday, November 22, 2013 at 12:00pm

Who: Karen Letofsky, Executive Director, Distress Centres
Angela Edoe, Survivor
Helena Brown, Survivor
Minister Rosario Marchese

ALTERNATIVE INTERVIEW AVAILABILITY:

When: Days leading up to and including Friday, November 22, 2013

Angela Edoe, Survivor
Helena Brown, Survivor
Karen Letofsky, Executive Director, Distress Centres

QUICK FACTS:

- 500 – number of individuals who received support through Survivor Support Program in 2012
 - 100% – number of counselled participants who said they had a lasting impact from the program
- 15% of all calls received by Distress Centres are from people considering suicide
- 6 – 10 - number of survivors of suicide loss for every person who dies by suicide
- 151 – number of languages that Distress Centres are capable of answering, through a language-interpreter service
- 60 minutes- average length of a “crisis call” from someone who is suicidal
- 74 – number of TTC subway stations with a Crisis Link phone providing a direct line to Distress Centre support and emergency services

- 600 – number of volunteers across three centres in Toronto
- 416-408-HELP – Distress Centres’ phone number central number in Toronto

QUOTES:

“It’s a long struggle back when you lose someone to suicide – things will never be the same as they were and that’s a lot to deal with,” said Angela Edoe.

“No one experience or mending process is the same as another’s,” said Helena Brown. “The worst feeling is the isolation. But there are things we can learn from each other and knowing someone is struggling like you, can often be the support you need to start the healing.”

“Questions, doubt, guilt and anger can consume survivors of suicide and homicide,” said Karen Letofsky. “There is an enormous amount of pain and a number of complex issues that arise. Our goal is to create a safe atmosphere for exploring the emotions and the questions to get to a place of healing.”

About Distress Centres

As the country’s oldest helpline, Distress Centres have built an infrastructure of programs and services that are responsive in delivering immediate and compassionate help 24-hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. Established in 1967, when making a suicide attempt was still illegal, the agency now has 600 specially trained crisis responders. Through its integrated, community-based partnerships network, Distress Centres provide multiple channels of support, making a meaningful difference to those who are vulnerable and at-risk.

Distress Centres provide an emotional safety net in the City of Toronto for those citizens in need.

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