

For Immediate Release
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News Release

World Suicide Prevention Day Commemorative Event - September 10, 2010

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Canada – Several community groups are organizing a commemorative event on World Suicide Prevention Day to remember those who have died by suicide, support those who grieve, and to raise public awareness that reducing the risk of suicide requires community participation.

The event will take place outside the Vancouver Art Gallery (Georgia, between Howe and Hornby) from 11:45 am to 1:00 pm on Friday September 10, 2010 and will feature speakers, music, drumming, a candle lighting ceremony and a minute of silence. Speakers include BC's chief coroner Dr. Diane Rotheron.

“We know that suicide can often be prevented, and yet almost 500 people die by suicide every year in BC,” says Dammy Damstrom-Albach, Coordinator at SAFER (Suicide Attempt Follow-up, Education & Research), a counselling service offered by Vancouver Coastal Health. “This day is about honouring those whose lives are lost, celebrating the successes of the suicide prevention services and programs in our community and supporting ongoing advocacy for a National Suicide Prevention Strategy for Canada.”

One of the keys to suicide prevention is to educate the public in recognizing warning signs of suicide and how they can get help for people who exhibit them. About 80% of people who attempt or die by suicide present warning signs to those around them. Warning signs associated with suicidal ideation include:

- Expressions of hopelessness, helplessness, purposelessness;
- Talking or joking about suicide or dying;
- Making preparations for death (giving away significant possessions, making a will, etc.);
- A previous suicide attempt;
- Being persistently depressed or down for more than a couple of weeks;
- Protracted anxiety or agitation; extreme mood swings/bipolarity; outbursts of rage, grief, violence;
- Isolation, withdrawal from previously enjoyed relationships and activities;
- Lethargy, lack of interest, low energy, insomnia or over-sleeping;
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs;
- Uncharacteristic high risk activity, impulsive behaviours;
- Low self-esteem, low self-worth, self-contempt, anger toward self;
- Significant loss(es), such as an important relationship, health, identity, economic security, freedom.

“It is important to reach out to a potentially suicidal person with care and concern for their safety,” notes Damstrom-Albach. “It is also critical to ask the person directly if they are considering suicide and to take their feelings seriously. This conversation can help to establish the degree and immediacy of the suicide risk. If you feel uncomfortable asking, it is important that you get someone else to ask. We need to listen to the person – without judgment and by showing empathy.”

If someone is indicating that they are suicidal, help is available.

“You need to get help for that person by connecting them with professionals, such as a family doctor, a mental health professional, a 24-hour crisis line, or a hospital emergency room if the person is imminently at risk,” urges Damstrom-Albach.

The following organizations partnered to organize World Suicide Prevention Day Vancouver 2010:

- Aboriginal Health Strategies Initiative
- Adler School of Professional Psychology
- BC Bereavement Helpline
- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- CHIMO Crisis Services
- The Child and Adolescent Response Team - Vancouver Coastal Health
- Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention Centre of British Columbia
- The Cross Cultural Mental Health Program - Vancouver Community Mental Health Centre
- The Josh Platzer Society for Teen Suicide Prevention and Awareness
- The Lookout Emergency Aid Society
- Mood Disorders Association of BC
- SAFER - Suicide Attempt Follow-up Education and Research, Vancouver Coastal Health

If you need support, please contact 1-800-SUICIDE

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