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HeartLine Responds to Increased Suicide Risk Through Training Opportunity

HeartLine, Central Oklahoma's Community Connection, announced today plans to sponsor a two-day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) workshop next month. The workshop will provide participants with the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to recognize persons at risk and to undertake appropriate management or referral of a person who is at risk of suicide.

HeartLine has been serving Central Oklahoma since 1971, and provides suicide prevention outreach programs, information and referral, listening and crisis intervention services. HeartLine's call specialists are ASIST-trained and are available around the clock through HeartLine's phone-based services, including 2-1-1, the 24/7 helpline 848-CARE, and two national suicide prevention lines 1-800-SUICIDE and 1-800-273-TALK.

"Suicide and non-fatal suicidal behaviors, ranging from gestures to suicide attempts," Tom Taylor, HeartLine's Director of Development and ASIST facilitator explained, "are far more common than most people think. Almost everyone will come into contact with suicidal behaviors in some significant way during their life. Many people have been trained to administer first aid to people having a heart attack, but very few know 'emergency first aid' for preventing suicide."

The workshop will deal directly with attitudes about suicide prevention. Participants will learn how to recognize persons who might be at risk. The major indicators of the possibility of suicide, according to Tom Taylor, are sudden changes in behavior or personality; feelings of desperation, helplessness, hopelessness, aloneness, loss and depression; a previous suicide attempt; and, most

importantly, suicide statements expressing a desire or intention to die. “One of the most important first aid skills to have,” Taylor emphasized, “is to ask directly about the suicide intentions of someone you are worried about.” Skill development exercises and community networking activities will take up the entire second day of the workshop.

Janet Riggan, HeartLine’s executive director and Tom Taylor both encouraged other organizations to consider suicide intervention training for their members. They also encouraged persons struggling with thoughts of suicide to contact HeartLine through 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273 TALK.

HeartLine’s ASIST workshop will be held Wednesday & Thursday, April 1st and 2nd, OR Saturday & Sunday, April 4th and 5th from 9 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. in northwest Oklahoma City. Attendance at both days of the two-day workshop is required. Advance registration is required and each workshop has limited capacity.

HeartLine’s ASIST training workshop is open to all caregivers (any person in a position of trust) who want to feel more comfortable, confident and competent in helping to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. This includes professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people. It is suitable for mental health professionals, nurses, physicians, teachers, counselors, youth workers, police and correctional staff, school support staff, clergy, and community volunteers. Mixed groups are encouraged since the workshop also facilitates collaboration among participants.

For more information about ASIST registration, fees, or volunteer opportunities, contact Tom Taylor at 840-9396, ext. 111, or visit www.heartlineoklahoma.org.

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