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HeartLine Needs Volunteers to Target Youth Suicide Problem in Oklahoma

As the American Association for Suicidology announces National Suicide Prevention Week for 2008 September 7 through 13, HeartLine, Central Oklahoma's Community Connection makes a push for volunteers to help address this disturbing problem. Oklahoma ranks 14th in the nation in its rate of suicide deaths.

According to the American Association for Suicidology:

- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States with one suicide occurring on average every 16 minutes.
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among 15- to 24-years-olds.
- The elderly make up 12.4% of the population, but comprise 16% of all suicides.
- Approximately 811,000 Americans attempt suicide each year.
- It is estimated that five million living Americans have attempted to kill themselves.

Every year in the United States, more than 17,000 men and women kill themselves with a gun; two-thirds more than the number who use a gun to kill another person. An estimated 5 million Americans are survivors of the suicide of a friend, family member, or loved one. HeartLine needs community volunteers to help expand suicide prevention programming outreach to youth in Oklahoma.

Sherry Crosthwait, HeartLine's Director of Suicide Prevention and Outreach programs, is available to discuss these and other facts surrounding suicide. Crosthwait is an expert in the areas of suicide assessment and intervention. To arrange an interview or for more information, please contact Crosthwait at 840-9396, ext. 113.

HeartLine's HELP (Healthy Education for Life Program) Suicide Awareness and Prevention Outreach Program is considered an invaluable service to the community as it assists schools and community youth groups in identifying students who are at risk. It informs everyone from those who work with young people to students about suicidal warnings signs and how to take action, and includes information on the impact of depression and substance abuse. The video-based program currently reaches approximately 5,000 youth each year. Following the presentations, over 10% of youth have self-identified that they have considered harming themselves or are currently thinking about attempting suicide.

HeartLine has been serving Central Oklahoma since 1971, and provides suicide prevention outreach programs, listening and crisis intervention services. HeartLine's Call Specialists are trained in crisis intervention 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.

"HeartLine believes that education is the key to prevention," states Sherry Crosthwait, Director of Suicide Prevention Outreach Programs. "Letting young people know there is help to get them through their struggles is essential. Youth have not had enough life experiences to know that there are resources and skills for coping with life's challenges and disappointments."

HeartLine offers facilitator training to equip volunteers with skills necessary to present the program to youth in schools. The next training session will be September 30, October 2, 7 and 9 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Pre-registration and attendance at all sessions is required. Contact HeartLine at 405.840.9396 for details

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