



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Suicide Prevention: A Mother's Journey

"I've never lived with, or dedicated myself to anyone for 16 years before, only Andrew. I wonder how long I will have to live without him before I can find a 'new normal' for living." These were Tracy Neely's innermost thoughts just three months after her 15 year old son died by suicide. Although deeply scarred, desperately saddened and never able to heal completely from her son's death, Tracy knows that good must arise from her life experience.

Since her son, Andrew "Neely", died on April 5, 2007, Tracy has made it her passion to let the world know why people face suicide. She has spent countless hours and her own finances on producing postcards, calling cards, magnets, writing pens, t-shirts and much more that proclaim "Suicide is not chosen, but it happens when pain exceeds resources for coping with pain." She also manages a Myspace page where youth can find her contact information and often reach out for her advice and support with dealing with depression or suicide. (www.myspace.com/help_the_hurting)

Tracy also makes educating parents of youth in suicide prevention a priority in her life. "Teens feel their parents are not approachable. They want to tell their parents, and some have tried to tell their parents that they struggle with depression and even thoughts of suicide, but feel like the parents aren't listening and aren't taking them serious, or wouldn't believe them if they tried to tell their parents." She reflects back on the time when her son was alive. At first, she never saw any indication that he had been thinking about taking his

life. After being educated in suicide prevention, though, she could see that he had been sending warning signs.

“It's our job as parents to protect our children, even if it's from themselves. It is very important to listen to our children and take them seriously. If your child tells you they feel they may be Bipolar or struggling with depression, stop what you are doing & listen,” Tracy urges.

In honor of her son's dream of making the world a better place, Tracy partnered with HeartLine in 2009 and hosted the first annual *Pennies from Heaven* Suicide Prevention Penny Drive. The last words Tracy said to her son were whispered into his ear, "Send us 'Pennies from Heaven' so we know that you are near." *Pennies from Heaven* benefits HeartLine's Suicide Prevention Lifelines, 1-800-SUICIDE and 1-800-273-TALK, as well as HeartLine's Youth Suicide Prevention and Awareness training, the Healthy Education for Life Program (HELP). The 2010 penny drive will be hosted at Oklahoma businesses through the month of April.

Pennies may be donated at these locations during the month of April:

- * Oklahoma State Firefighters Museum, 2716 Northeast 50th Street, OKC, OK
- * Fort Thunder Harley-Davidson, 500 SW 11th St., Moore, OK
- * Subway, 23 N. Council Rd. (at Reno Ave) OKC, OK
- * Weatherford Fire Dept., 118 N. Kansas St. (just north of Main St.), Weatherford, OK
- * Jerry's Barber Shop, 115 West Main Street, Weatherford, OK
- * By mail: HeartLine, PO Box 12832, Okla. City, OK 73157 Attn: Pennies from Heaven.

*Online at www.heartlineoklahoma.org. Go to General Donations and please specify in the “Comment” section that the donation is for *Pennies from Heaven*.

Donations made by mail and online can be used as a tax deduction.

*If you would like to host a penny drive jar at your business or organization, please call (405) 840-9396

Pennies from Heaven will also benefit from the Tornado Alley Roller Girls’ April 18, 2010 bout at Oklahoma City Farmers Market. HeartLine will receive 5% of all tickets sold. Doors open at 6:00pm and tickets are \$12.00 at the door. Visit www.okcrd.com for more details.

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 warning signs and how to take action, and includes information on the impact of depression and substance abuse. The video-based program, presented by concerned volunteers, currently reaches approximately 5,000 youth each year. Following the presentations, over 11% of youth have self-identified that they have considered harming themselves or are currently thinking about attempting suicide. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Oklahoma youth aged 10-24.

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.

For more information about volunteer opportunities or how to incorporate HeartLine's HELP program in a school or youth setting, call 405-840-9396 or visit www.heartlineoklahoma.org.

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