

**MISSISSIPPI BEND AREA EDUCATION AGENCY
YELLOW RIBBON SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Suicide Prevention Classroom Video and Material Outline

Kit includes:

- Suicide Prevention Video (7 min. in length)
- Yellow Ribbon Brochures
- Yellow Ribbon Cards
- Youth Suicide Brochure
- Yellow Ribbon Box (optional)

Overview of material:

- **Video:** Features family and friends of an Eastern Iowa teen who committed suicide. Outlines warning signs and statistics about depression and suicide. Teens discuss suicide prevention. Approximately 8 minutes in length.
- **Brochures:** National Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program information and local Eastern Iowa Chapter contact information. Youth suicide brochure that gives more information about youth suicide, and some Iowa-specific information.
- **Yellow Ribbon Cards:** A non-verbal prevention tool for teens to use when feeling depressed or experiencing suicidal thoughts. These cards are used as a way for teens to ask for help for themselves or friends. To refill the supply of Yellow Ribbon Cards contact Brad or Dawn Knutson at (563) 386-3700 or brad@knutson.com.
- **Yellow Ribbon Box:** A way for students to anonymously bring attention to another student they believe might be struggling with depression or having suicidal thoughts. This box is typically placed in an area accessible to students yet can be monitored by school staff. Guidance staff should check the box daily if possible and follow up with any student whose name appears in the box.

YELLOW RIBBON SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM (YRSPP)

The national organization was founded in Westminster, Colorado by Dale and Dar Emme. The Emmes' lost their 17 year-old son, Michael Emme, to suicide. Michael Emme committed suicide in his yellow mustang after a break up with his girlfriend. Michael's friends wanted to know what they could do to help prevent suicide. It is those teens and Michael's parents who designed the Yellow Ribbon Cards and prevention program. Feedback to the national program has shown 2,500 young lives have been saved by this program. You can find out more information about the Emme's in the *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* book, or at www.yellowribbon.org

The Eastern Iowa/Quad City Chapter of the YRSPP was started May 2000 by Brad, Dawn and Ashley Knutson. They lost their 16 year-old son and brother, Jeff Knutson, to suicide on July 28, 1999. After the loss of Jeff, his family wanted to help other teens who may be feeling depressed or suicidal.

Background Information on Knutson family featured in video

We wanted to share with you some background information about Jeff Knutson and his family who are featured in this videotape in order to make it a more personal experience for you and your class.

Jeff committed suicide on July 28, 1999. He was 16 years old and it was the summer of his sophomore year at North Scott High School in Eldridge, IA. Jeff was working as a lifeguard at Scott County Park Pool that summer. He was involved in his church youth group and had attended a week of church camp prior to his suicide. Jeff had earned the rank of Eagle Scout. He was an exceptionally good bass guitar player and had saved his money working as a paperboy to buy his guitar and two amplifiers. He had many friends and a family who loved him very much.

Jeff did not show any of the typical signs of depression or share any suicidal thoughts he may have felt. He left a note that just said good-bye to his family and friends and did not give any reason for his suicide. To this day the reason is still a mystery. After Jeff's death a toxicology report was done which showed no sign of drugs or alcohol in his system.

Jeff's family (Brad, Dawn and Ashley) knew that they would need help in dealing with Jeff's death. It came as a total surprise to them that Jeff had committed suicide. They went to counseling for 9 months learning how to best deal with their grief, anger, hurt and loss. Many questions needed to be answered.... how do you face your community? How do you deal with the untrue rumors? How do you pick up and move forward with your life? How do you teach all of the teens who knew Jeff and were watching the family that you can take a tragedy in your life and use it to help others?

On what would have been Jeff's 17th birthday, (May 10, 2000) the Knutson's made their first YRSPP presentation at North Scott High School to a Psychology Class. As of April 2008 they have completed over 300 presentations to thousands of teens about depression and suicide prevention.

CLASS DISCUSSION AFTER VIEWING VIDEO

Suggested Talking Points:

1. Reaction to the video
2. Tell about resources available to teens in the school and community
3. Distribute Yellow Ribbon Cards and explain how to use them to help themselves or a friend
4. Talk about how sometimes teens do not seek help due to the fear of people thinking they are "crazy" or "weird".
5. Discuss how they should take it seriously when someone makes an off-handed statement about dying or killing himself or herself.
6. Discuss the effects of drugs and alcohol as depressants and how that may exaggerate feelings of depression/suicide.

Suggested Open Ended Questions:

1. Would you know how to respond if someone said they would kill themselves?
2. After listening to the tape, would your response be different?
3. Why do you feel teens do not seek help or speak out about their feelings of depression or suicide?
4. Who could you go to in your community or school in order to seek help?
5. How do you think your actions and attitude towards others affects the way they feel?
6. Are you surprised that the number of teen suicides is so high?

Suggested Ideas for Closing Statement:

1. Emphasize warning signs of 1) someone saying that they are going to kill themselves and 2) giving away possessions/making final arrangements, etc.
2. Ask them to keep cards in their billfolds incase they are in a situation where they may need to help themselves or a friend.
3. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem! It's OK to ask for help!

Additional Information

The local Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program is available to speak at schools and professional functions. For additional help or for ideas on presentation feel free to contact the local Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program. In the Quad Cities contact Brad or Dawn Knutson at (563) 386-3700, or email at brad@knutson.com. Please leave a number (s) where you can be reached during the day or evening. Outside the Quad Cities please visit www.yellowribbon.org and click on "Chapters".

The Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency has been a vital partner of this local program. For information regarding counseling support please contact your current MBAEA (or other local AEA) personnel assigned to your school. Funding for free distribution of this free education video kit made possible by a contribution from the MJL Foundation Walk for Hope (www.mjlfoundation.org).

