

# TSPN CALL TO ACTION

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APRIL 2011

## TENNESSEE SUICIDE PREVENTION NETWORK



### JOINT RESOLUTION CONFIRMED FOR 10TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM ON APRIL 29

A joint resolution from the Tennessee General Assembly honoring TSPN's tenth anniversary was presented on the Senate floor on March 30 and will be presented at the 10th Anniversary Symposium on April 29.



Above: the logo for the "We All Matter" Facebook group. Below: Sally Spencer-Thomas, who will update symposium participants regarding the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (photo courtesy of Spencer-Thomas).

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Executive Director Scott Ridgway was on hand to receive the resolution, which recognizes the Network's contributions to suicide prevention and mental health since its foundation in 2001. Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey and Speaker of the House Beth Harwell have been invited to present the resolution during the event.

In other news, Sally Spencer-Thomas, Executive Secretary of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, will provide information about said group, which was established last year to update and advance the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. Spencer-Thomas was chosen to coordinate this effort because of her work as the Executive Director of the Carson J. Spencer Foundation, which she founded and named after her brother, who died by suicide in 2004. A licensed psychologist and with over 15 years of experience as a college mental health counselor, Spencer-Thomas is a nationally regarded speaker on mental wellness and suicide prevention.

Also participating in the event is Austin Watson, a Mount Juliet teenager whose Facebook group "We All Matter", intended for youth struggling with suicidal impulses, has attracted both attention and members from across the country. Watson founded the group after a lifelong battle with depression and the suicide deaths of two close friends. "We All Matter" and its members seek to share their problems and their stories without the risk of judgment or stigma, and to support others experiencing the same struggles.

In addition to Spencer-Thomas and Watson, a panel of state department commissioners will explain the public-private partnership between the Network and their respective agencies, and how they plan to assist with implementation of the Tennessee Strategies for Suicide Prevention during the next several years.

The luncheon address will be an update on the latest grant cycle of the Tennessee Lives Count (TLC) Project. TLC has spent the last three years providing suicide prevention training to staff members within Youth Development Centers and group homes managed by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. Project staff have also provided peer support and resiliency training to youth within the Tennessee juvenile justice system.

Registration by check and credit card is available on the TSPN website ([www.tspn.org](http://www.tspn.org)). A full listing of event sponsors is available on pages 2-4 of this publication.

TSPN thanks its many members and supporters for 10 years of education, awareness, and action on behalf of suicide prevention and mental health. We look forward to seeing you at this event and working with you to save lives in Tennessee.



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NATIONAL  
**SUICIDE  
PREVENTION  
LIFELINE**  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

## TSPN 10TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM SPONSORS CO-HOST SPONSOR



"Giving Hope, Saving Lives"

The Tennessee Lives Count (TLC) Project is a federally funded statewide early intervention and prevention program devoted to the prevention of youth suicide. TLC recently completed its second grant cycle focusing on youth in the juvenile justice system. Project staff provided gatekeeper training to staff within the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, including those at the state's Youth Development Centers, as well as workers in community organizations, and university students and faculty. Also, over 500 youth in community and residential facilities received the "Promise for Tomorrow" peer suicide awareness training developed by the Jason Foundation, Inc.

### UNDERWRITERS AND FRIENDS

Amerigroup caters exclusively to low-income individuals, working directly with state administrators and the federal government to provide access to quality healthcare for persons enrolled in Medicaid, SCHIP or Medicare. It is the largest publicly traded managed care company with this particular emphasis. Tennessee is one of ten states in its service area.



The Behavioral Healthcare Centers in Clarksville, Columbia, and Martin are operated by Tennessee Health Management (THM), a long-term care and assisted living company centered in Parsons. These new facilities specialize in inpatient geriatric behavioral health, with nurse, psychiatrists, and physicians available around the clock to provide therapy, treatment, and crisis intervention for mentally ill older adults.

Since 1976, Lakeside Behavioral Health System has been the premier provider of specialized behavioral health and addictive disease services in the Memphis and Mid-South region. The 295-bed facility is located on a safe and private 37-acre campus in northeast Shelby County and provides comprehensive behavioral health treatment for adults, seniors, adolescents and children. Lakeside's specialized programs treat disorders such as depression and anxiety, as well as addictive disease disorders such as alcoholism and drug addiction.



Saint Thomas Health Services is the leading faith-based health care system in Tennessee, and is a part of Ascension Health, the largest non-profit health care system in the United States. It operates Saint Thomas and Baptist Hospitals in Nashville, Middle Tennessee Medical Center in Murfreesboro and Hickman Community Hospital in Centerville.



The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) is an independent state agency with a primary mission of advocacy for improving the quality of life for Tennessee children and families. TCCY works with state agencies, juvenile courts, child advocacy groups, interested citizens and other organizations to improve services to children. Among the many services it provides, TCCY evaluates the delivery of services to children in state custody and their families through the Children's Program Outcome Review Team quality service review process and administers several federal and state juvenile justice grant programs.

The Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability brings together and leverages programs, resources, and organizations to protect and ensure the quality of life and independence of older Tennesseans and adults with disabilities. It also serves as a clearinghouse for information on needs and characteristics of older adults, maintains a specialized resource library, and responds to requests for information.



UnitedHealthCare, formerly known as AmeriChoice, is the country's premier provider of high quality, personalized public sector health care programs, serving more than three million people in Medicaid, Medicare and Children's Health Insurance Programs in 25 states and the District of Columbia. A longtime TennCare partner, AmeriChoice is widely regarded as an innovator in public sector health care.

The Psychiatric Hospital at Vanderbilt, a unit of Vanderbilt University Medical Center, provides inpatient, partial hospitalization and intensive outpatient services to children, adolescents and adults with psychiatric and substance abuse problems. Its 88-bed facility is located on the southern end of the Vanderbilt campus and offers round-the-clock crisis assessment and admission.



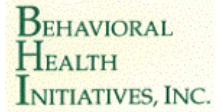
Volunteer Behavioral Health Care Systems, Inc., offers 18 offices across southeast Tennessee and the Upper Cumberland area. It offers therapy and case management services for adults and children with mental health and substance abuse concerns. It also manages several peer support centers and a Crisis Stabilization Unit.

## UNDERWRITERS AND FRIENDS (CONTINUED)

**CR CORNERSTONE of RECOVERY** Founded in 1989, Cornerstone of Recovery provides comprehensive treatment for drug and alcohol addiction. Cornerstone's facilities in Louisville and Alcoa provide detox and assessment/observation for people with substance abuse problems, as well as inpatient residential and intensive outpatient services for adults and youth.

Behavioral Health Initiatives, Inc., and its subsidiaries are sponsoring our symposium:

- Carey Counseling Center, a subsidiary of Behavioral Health Initiatives, provides outpatient mental health and substance abuse services to residents of west Tennessee. It features a special recovery program for DUI/DWI offenders.
- Quinco Mental Health Center has provided community-based mental health and substance abuse services to the people of Tennessee since 1974.
- Professional Care Services, Inc. offers assessment, intervention, treatment, rehabilitation and support services for mental health consumers across west Tennessee.



Carey  
Counseling  
Center, Inc.



**Professional Care Services, Inc.**

"Helping Hands In Our Community"



**Frontier Health**

Where People Are Important

Frontier Health is northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia's leading resource for behavioral health, mental health, substance abuse, developmental disabilities, and vocational rehabilitation services. It offers treatment for family violence, mental illness, mental retardation, dual diagnosis and substance abuse for all age groups.

More than 500,000 community participants have been trained in suicide intervention skills through LivingWorks since its establishment in 1983. Through its ASIST, safeTALK, suicideTALK, and suicideCare training protocols, LivingWorks provides community-based training in suicide prevention through a network of trainers spanning six countries.



The Mental Health Cooperative (MHC) incorporates intensive case management, psychiatric/clinic services and 24-hour emergency psychiatric services into an integrated system of care. MHC's services enable children and adults with serious mental illness to live successful and satisfying lives in the community.

A subsidiary of Psychiatric Solutions, Inc., Rolling Hills Hospital opened this year in Franklin. The 80-bed facility, which includes geriatric and dual diagnosis wings, serves psychiatric and chemically dependent patients from all over central and south-central Tennessee.



STARS Nashville is the leading school-based Student Assistance Program service in Middle Tennessee, serving more than 70 schools and community sites. Through assemblies, classroom presentations, and group or individual counseling sessions, STARS Nashville assists schools in confronting issues that threaten the emotional, psychological and academic well-being of area students. STARS Nashville is also well known for its "Kids on the Block" puppetry outreach program with operates in eight Middle Tennessee counties.

TriStar Health System is the region's largest, most comprehensive healthcare provider with 19 hospitals and 10 ambulatory surgery centers in Tennessee, Kentucky and north Georgia—15 of them in Tennessee. TriStar features the region's most comprehensive array of behavioral health and chemical dependency services for seniors, adults and adolescents, ranging from inpatient to intensive outpatient care, at multiple locations.



The University of Tennessee-Chattanooga is best known for its business program, ranked among the top 100 in the country by *BusinessWeek*. Special thanks go out the Counseling Center at UTC for arranging the University's sponsorship—particularly Center director Nancy L. Badger, Ph.D., who was appointed to TSPN's Advisory Council earlier this year.

Each year Youth Villages serves roughly 17,000 emotionally and behaviorally troubled children and their families in ten states through its adoption, residential, foster care, in-home and transitional living services. Last year a Casey Family Programs study connected the efforts of Youth Villages to a 34% reduction of children in the Tennessee's foster care system over a ten-year period.



## OTHER SPONSORS AND DONORS

The following agencies have offered in-kind sponsorships for our 10th Anniversary Symposium:

Blount County Community Health Initiative  
 Contact Helpline  
 Division of Alcohol and Drug Services, Tennessee Department of Mental Health  
 Jason Foundation, Inc.  
 Mental Health Association of East Tennessee  
 Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee  
 NAMI Tennessee  
 The QPR Institute  
 Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations  
 Tennessee Department of Mental Health  
 Tennessee Department of Human Services  
 Tennessee Voices for Children



## TENNESSEAN COLUMNIST WARNS AGAINST MENTAL HEALTH CUTS

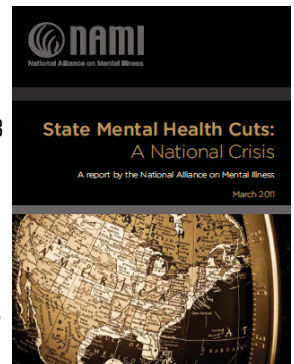
A recent *Tennessean* editorial calls attention to pending cuts to our state's mental health services funding.

In the March 10 edition, columnist Dwight Lewis references an Associated Press story which reports that state governments have cut roughly \$1.8 billion dollars from mental health funding over the last 18 months. This figure was provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), which also reported that 32 states and Washington, D.C., cut their funding at the height of the recent recession. The state of Kentucky slashed its mental health budget by 47% between fiscal 2009 and 2011.

Lewis cited Tom Starling, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee (MHAMT), regarding the possible effects of mental health cuts within our own state, which lost 10% of its mental health funding within two years. "...[N]ot only have hospital beds been decreased 27 percent, including the closing of the only remaining children's inpatient unit, but those decreases were not balanced by cheap and effective prevention, early intervention, or peer support programs that would have prevented some crises or hospitalization... As a result, more Tennesseans have found themselves and their family members at increased risk of psychiatric crises, criminalization, homelessness, prison and suicide. It is extremely important that the state legislature preserve the very fragile infrastructure by continuing community-based recovery programs that provide increased help and build resiliency.

NAMI's 2006 *Grading the States* report gave Tennessee's mental health system a C- for its handling of serious mental illness, citing the effects of the recent TennCare disenrollments. In the 2009 report, Tennessee's grade stood at a D. By fiscal 2009, Tennessee's state hospitals were serving 49% fewer people than they had in 2007—only two other states had greater declines in patient enrollment

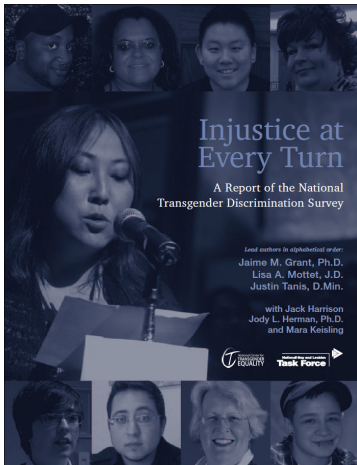
Lewis concluded his column with an appeal for readers to contact their state legislators to prevent any further cuts to Tennessee's mental health budget. You can find your legislators through the Tennessee General Assembly's website ([www.legislature.state.tn.us](http://www.legislature.state.tn.us)).



In his column, Lewis cited figures from the NAMI report *State Mental Health Cuts: A National Crisis*. The report is available for download via the NAMI website ([www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)).

## TRANSGENDER PERSONS 25 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE

Transgendered persons are 25 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population according to a survey by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE).



This figure was a key finding of *Injustice at Every Turn*, a joint report by NCTE and the Task Force released February 3. The report is the country's first large-scale national study of discrimination against transgender, transsexual, and gender non-conforming people, with approximately 6,450 people participated in the report survey.

41% of transgendered persons reported having attempted suicide at least once, compared to 1.6% of the non-transgendered control group. Especially high percentages were recorded among those who reported experiencing harassment and bullying in school environments (51%), losing a job due to gender bias (55%), having done sex work (60%), low household income (61%), or a physical or sexual assault (61% for physical assault survivors; 64% for sexual assault).

Additionally, African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, and multiracial transgendered persons all attempted suicide at rates far above their respective rates in the general population. Low-income persons are at higher risk than their higher-income counterparts (54% for persons earning less than \$10,000 annually versus 26% for persons earning \$100,000 or more). Persons who never completed high school or college are more likely to attempt suicide than those who did (48% versus 33%).

*Injustice at Every Turn* is available for free download at the Task Force website ([www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf)).

## COLLEGE FRESHMAN MENTAL HEALTH HITS ALL-TIME LOW

An annual study from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute suggests the mental health status of incoming college freshman is at all-time low. Increasing academic and financial pressures are implicated in the findings.

UCLA's American Freshman survey has included a self-estimate of student's mental health since 1985. In the 2010 report, only 51.9% of new college students rated their mental health as above average or higher, down from the 64% reported in 1985 and the 55.3% reported in 2009.

Male freshmen were more likely to report poor mental health than their female counterparts, which is typical for the survey. They were more likely to report learning disabilities as well as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder [this year's survey was the first to include questions about ADD/ADHD]. Women were more likely to report psychological issues like depression.

However, certain other questions suggest the low self-ratings have a financial component. According to January 30 *USA TODAY* report on the study, 73.4% of students reported receiving some kind of financial assistance, the highest level since 2001. This statistic suggests that students are more conscious about the cost of college and are willing to settle for "safety schools" rather than their first choices. Furthermore, the number of students who agreed with the statement "the chief benefit of college is that it increases one's earning power" was at an all-time high of 72.7%. The number of freshman with both parents unemployed was also at its highest point (5%).

*"Students are wondering, 'How am I going to make this work?... The only way I can get a good job is to have a higher education."*

"[Students are] wondering, 'How am I going to make all of this work?... The only way I can get a good job is to have a higher education,'" explains study co-author Sylvia Hurtado. "...[T]his generation is not sure if they're going to do better than their parents."

Noting the impact of poor mental health on time management, alcohol and drug consumption, academic motivation, the current study is a wake-up call to college administrators to help incoming freshman and other students with their mental health needs. "This is new for college faculty," Hurtado said. "They're used to dealing with students' cognitive abilities and not emotional. But colleges are responding. They're looking at emergency plans and giving information to faculty so they can help identify students having trouble."

## SPOTLIGHT: MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA SUPPORT COMMUNITY

Mental Health America (MHA) has developed an online forum to support people with mental illness, along with their families, friends, and caregivers.



Participants in the Mental Health America Support Community ([www.mentalhealthamerica.net/community](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/community)) can join moderated discussion groups and create online journals, sharing their experiences with mental illness and their journeys toward health and recovery. Members can create customized profiles for the forums, post photos and video content, create and update blogs, and read journals and postings from other members.

More importantly, the Mental Health America Support Community offers a free and secure outlet for participants to get answers to their questions, and draw strength and inspiration from other people dealing with mental illness. Members have total control of their profile's privacy options and can only share the information and experiences they want others to see.

"We know how important social support and connecting with others are to protecting our mental health and improving well-being," said David Shern, Ph.D., MHA's president and CEO, in a July 26 press release. "This new community will allow more people to connect with each other, find valuable resources, and learn and gain inspiration from others."

The Mental Health America Support Community was created with assistance from Inspire, a non-profit group which builds and manages online communities and support groups for public health issues and people dealing with specific mental health conditions. Over 150,000 people across the world are members of one of Inspire's online communities.

## MOTHERS WITH MORE CHILDREN AT LOWER SUICIDE RISK

The number of children a woman has may reduce her risk of suicide later in life, according to a multi-year study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* this past spring.

The report comes out of Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan, where researcher Chun-Yuh Yang reviewed birth and mortality figures for 1.3 million Taiwanese women, from the time they had their first child to a point about twenty years later. Yang found that women who had two children were 39% less likely to die by suicide than those with only one child. Those with three or more children were 60% less likely to die by suicide than the women with just one child.

As explained in a March 23, 2010, MSNBC summary of Yang's research, the report reframes the theory once used to explain the lower suicide rates of married women compared to their single counterparts—namely, that marriage is a protective factor for women. This current research, alongside other studies out of Denmark, Finland, and Norway, suggests that motherhood is the source of the protective effect, not marriage itself. For example, Yang observed that the trend held constant even after accounting for marital status, as well as educational level and the age at which the mothers first gave birth.

Yang theorizes that a larger number of children may provide a greater support network for mothers during times of emotional stress, or that more children make mothers feel more needed. He also suggested another variable: women with depression or mental illnesses may be less likely to have large numbers of children in the first place.

The citation for this study is as follows: Yang, C. (2010). Association between parity and risk of suicide among parous women. *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 182: 569-572.



Image copyright 2010, Canadian Medical Association.

# TSPN REGIONAL CALENDAR

No December meetings are scheduled unless otherwise marked. Dates in **bold and in metallic gold** indicate alternate meeting dates intended to accommodate state holidays or other previously scheduled events.

## East Tennessee Region

monthly, 3rd Thursday, 12:00 PM

Mental Health Association of East Tennessee, Inc., 9050 Executive Park Drive, Suite 104-A, Knoxville, 37923

April 21, May 19, June 16, July 21, August 18, September 15, October 20, and November 17

## Memphis/Shelby County Region

monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 11:00 AM

The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, 1900 Union Avenue, Memphis, 38104

April 19, May 17, June 21, July 19, August 16, September 20, October 18 and November 15

## Mid-Cumberland Region

monthly, 2nd Thursday, 9:30 AM

Non-Profit Conference Center, 293 Plus Park Boulevard, Suite 201, Nashville, 37217

April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, and December 8

## Northeast Region

monthly, 4th Tuesday, 10:30 AM

Boone's Creek Christian Church, 305 Boone's Creek Road, Gray, 37615

April 26, May 24, June 28, July 26, August 23, September 27, October 25, and November 22

## Rural West

monthly, 3rd Wednesday, 10:30 AM

Behavioral Health Initiatives, 36C Sandstone Circle, Jackson, 38305

April 20, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, and November 16

## South Central

monthly, 2nd Monday, 10:00 AM

Conference Room A, South Central Regional Health Office, 1216 Trotwood Avenue, Columbia 38401

April 11, May 9, June 13, July 11, August 8, September 12, October 10, November 14, and December 14

## Southeast Region

monthly, 1st Thursday, 10:00 AM

Downtown Chattanooga YMCA, 301 West Sixth Street, Chattanooga, 37402

April 7, May 5, June 2, July 7, August 4, September 1, October 6, November 3, and December 1

## Upper Cumberland Region

monthly, 4th Thursday, 9:00 AM

Volunteer Behavioral Health Care Systems, 1200 Willow Avenue, Cookeville, 38502

**April 21**, May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25, September 22, October 27, and **November 17**

## Intra-State Department Meetings

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Third Floor Conference Room, Cordell Hull Building, 425 Fifth Avenue North, Nashville, 37243 (3:00 PM)

April 20, July 20, and October 19

## Advisory Council

June 8-9 (Montgomery Bell State Park Inn, Burns)

September 7 (location to be announced)

## Blount County Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention Alliance

monthly, 1st Friday, 12:00 PM

Blount County Health Department Conference Room, 302 McGhee Street, Maryville, TN 37801

April 1, May 6, June 3, July 1, August 5, September 2, October 7, November 4, and December 2

## Davidson County Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 4th Thursday, 3:00 PM

April 27, May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25, September 22, October 27, and **November 17**

## Giles County Suicide Prevention Task Force

quarterly, 3rd Monday, 1:30 PM

Giles County Career Center, 125 South Cedar Lane, Pulaski, 38478

June 20 and September 19

## Hickman-Perry County Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 4th Friday, 1:30 PM

Hickman Community Hospital, Senior Care Building, 135 East Swan Street, Centerville, 37033

April 22, May 27, June 24, July 22, August 26, September 23, October 28, and **November 18**

# ADVISORY COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are interested in getting involved with TSPN on a local level or have other questions, contact the chairperson of your region as indicated by the map provided below:

East Tennessee region

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