



## St. Tammany Outreach for the Prevention of Suicide (STOPS)

STOPS was formed as a private non-profit organization in December of 2001. The organization is comprised entirely of volunteers who are committed to providing community programs in an effort to lower the suicide rate in the parish as well as to ameliorate the sting of the loss of a loved one to suicide. At the time of the creation of STOPS, St. Tammany had the highest suicide rate in the state. It is not known if this statistic continues to hold true as many parishes so gravely affected by Hurricane Katrina and her ensuing devastation have experienced an increased number of suicidal deaths.

The STOPS organization is overseen by an active volunteer Board of Directors comprised of community leaders from various professions including law enforcement, mental health, social services, the legal profession and others interested in guiding the mission of STOPS.

STOPS also offers many programs to the citizenry of St. Tammany in an effort to decrease the loss of lives from suicide. These programs are listed below.

**Local Outreach to the Survivors of Suicide (LOSS) Team**-This program provides immediate hands-on assistance to those newly aggrieved by the loss of a loved one to suicide. A survivor of suicide is defined as anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide. The Team is a program of the St. Tammany Parish Coroner's Office. Two STOPS volunteers, many of whom are suicide survivors themselves, go to the scene of every suicide in the Parish to provide comfort and support, to share their experience and knowledge with the new suicide survivors, and to assist in any fashion deemed appropriate. Information and resources are given to the new survivors. For additional information please call Robert Freehill at 985-237-5506.

**Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Support Group** - Research has shown that every suicide leaves at least 6 survivors. A suicide survivor is defined as anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide. This group meets twice a month on the west side of the Parish and once a month on the east side. The specifics are listed below.

**Mandeville SOS Group Meeting:** - Meets at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 4499 Sharp Rd., Mandeville, 70471. The group meets every second and fourth Thursday of the month from 6:30 pm to 8 pm. Please call Virginia Blanke, 985-626-7012, for more information.

**Slidell SOS Group Meeting:** - Meets at Christ Episcopal Church, 1434 Seventh St., Slidell. The group meets the first Thursday of every month from 6:30 pm to 8pm. For additional information please call Virginia Blanke, 985-626-7012.

**Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)** - This program provides training for caregivers seeking to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. Participants often include: people concerned about family or friends, emergency service workers, counselors, teachers, ministers, mental health practitioners, law enforcement workers and community volunteers. The emphasis is on suicide first-aid. This is a full two-day intensive course taught by 2 to 3 trained staff. ASIST is held at the Greater Covington Center, 317 N. Jefferson, Covington 70433, 4 to 6 times per calendar year. The course is approved by the NASW-LA Chapter for 12.5 CEU clinical credits. For date and times please call Robert Freehill at 985-237-5506.

**Suicide Community Awareness** - STOPS can provide suicide awareness and prevention programs by speaking to churches, groups, organizations, businesses, agencies, etc. To schedule an awareness presentation please call Robert Freehill at 985-237-5506.

**safeTALK** is a suicide alertness program that prepares community members of all kinds to be suicide alert helpers in only a few hours. *safeTALK* participants are aware that opportunities to help a person with thoughts of suicide are sometimes missed, dismissed, and avoided. Participants will learn the TALK steps, (Tell, Ask, Listen, KeepSafe) and can take a vital step in linking those people who experience suicidal ideation with caring community members who are trained in suicide intervention skills. Being trained in this process can assist in saving lives in our communities. *safeTALK* is designed to be used in organizations and communities where there are caregivers who have been trained in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). For information please call Robert Freehill at 985-237-5506.

*STOPS has been awarded a one-year grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana Hurricane Relief Fund. This grant is overseen co-jointly by Christ Episcopal Church in Covington and the STOPS Board. This generous grant will allow STOPS to provide 2 additional no-cost therapy programs to the community beginning in September of 2006. These new programs are targeted at children, families and adults who are experiencing the loss of any person, place or thing following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and is not limited to the loss of a loved one to suicide.*

**Individual and Family Therapeutic Counseling** - this program will be offered at no cost and will be held on both the east and west sides of the Parish. Licensed Clinical Social Workers with provide weekly counseling to any individual or family group that wishes this type of support during the difficult aftermath of Katrina. For more information call Robert Freehill. 985-237-5506.

If STOPS can ever be of any service to you, your agency or organization, or if you wish to volunteer your services or to donate to STOPS, please call or write us any time at 985-237-5506, 427 North Theard St, Private Mail Box 500, Covington, LA 70433 and email us at [contact@stops-la.org](mailto:contact@stops-la.org),