



News Release
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A New Approach to Solving the Suicide Epidemic and Eliminating Barriers to Accessing Mental Healthcare

NEPTUNE BEACH, Florida, February 16, 2021 - [Here Tomorrow](#) is a new nonprofit organization serving the Beaches communities with a mission to prevent suicide deaths by building a community where mental healthcare is acceptable and accessible. The organization opened its doors to the community in January and offers a warm, welcoming physical and virtual space to have conversations about mental health.

In 2019, in Duval and St. Johns counties alone, 230 members of our community were lost to suicide, the most preventable form of death.¹ The hearts of countless families and loved ones were shattered in a head-on collision with the finality of death and unspeakable loss.

Board president and chief benefactor Joe Kenney said, “Here Tomorrow exists to face this problem head-on and reimagine how we as a community can come together to solve it.”

Most large national suicide prevention organizations primarily focus on research and education. Here Tomorrow will provide community education to increase awareness but is taking a step further by utilizing innovative approaches to connect with those who are most at-risk, and through community collaboration, link them with the help they need when they need it.

Executive director Hannah Hackworth developed the core service model, in consultation with international suicide prevention expert Paul Quinnett who advised, “When we solve the problems that people kill themselves to solve, the reasons for suicide disappear.” Hackworth explained, “We are not planning to wait for those most at-risk for suicide to come to us and ask for help. We intend to collaborate with primary care offices, emergency departments, inpatient psychiatric units and law enforcement to identify and engage people before it is too late.” Quinnett cautioned, “Those who are most at-risk for suicide are least likely to ask for help. If we require them to ask for help, they will continue to die.”

The organization’s work force will be primarily made up of recovery peer specialists, individuals who are in recovery from a mental health condition and have been trained to support others on

their recovery journey. Hackworth said, “Change is a process and people thinking about seeking professional help and those who love them need support, answers to their questions, and someone to listen who truly understands.”

Kenney’s connection to Here Tomorrow stems from his family’s personal loss. On April 19, 2019, he lost his son Gary, age 30, to suicide. Prior to Gary’s death, Joe did everything he could to help Gary, who was battling severe depression. When he and his son needed help the most, Joe encountered a healthcare system that was not equipped to advise him or help him keep Gary safe.

On the day of Gary’s funeral Joe made a decision. He decided to create something that did not exist before, an entity designed to be there for people who are feeling hopeless and families that have no place to turn to for help.

Core services provided by Here Tomorrow include crisis support, family support, recovery planning, information, referral to mental health practitioners and social services and systematic follow-up phone calls over the course of a year. Hackworth said, “We are committed to eliminating the barriers to accessing mental healthcare including affordability and availability of care. Nationally people wait an average of more than 30 days for their first mental healthcare appointment; we plan to change that through collaboration with stakeholders across our community.”

Five years ago, a group of concerned citizens in the Beaches community came together with a mission to normalize the conversation about mental health in schools, places of worship, workplaces, and homes. They knew that this problem can only be solved through collaboration and a collective voice; the vision led to the formation of Here Tomorrow.

The number of suicide deaths per 100,000 continues to climb in our community from 12.9 per 100,000 (2000) to 17.4 per 100,000 (2019) in Duval County and 9.1 per 100,000 (2000) to 18.3 per 100,000 (2019) in St. Johns County. Rates in both counties are higher than the state of Florida and national average¹.

According to the State of Florida Duval County Community Health Needs Assessment, participants named mental health as the number-one public health challenge in Duval County and yet, until now, there has not been a single local organization with a primary focus on addressing the suicide epidemic in our community.²

The increased social isolation that is occurring as Northeast Florida continues to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic is magnifying this problem and putting at-risk individuals at greater risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, since the pandemic began the number of people experiencing suicidal thoughts have increased significantly, most dramatically among adults age 18 to 24.

For every suicide death, there are 20 people who attempt suicide. The CDC estimates total annual cost of suicides and nonfatal suicide attempts in the United States to be \$93.5 billion³.

Kenney said, “if Here Tomorrow can ensure that one son, one father, one brother, or one sister is here with us tomorrow, it will all be worth it.”

If you or someone you love is experiencing depression and contemplating seeking help, contact Here Tomorrow at 904-372-9087 or hello@heretomorrow.org. There is no cost for the support and follow-up services provided by Here Tomorrow. For more information and resources, visit Here Tomorrow at www.heretomorrow.org or 910 Third Street, Neptune, Beach, FL 32266.

Sources: ¹<http://www.flhealthcharts.com>; ²Duval County Community Health Assessment Updated March 2020; ³<http://www.CDC.gov>.