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National Newsletter

Bi-annual January/June 2012

January 2012

OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION

Hi All,

Together with charities nationwide we are facing some funding challenges that the board together with the office are working extremely hard to overcome.

After assessing our situation, it is apparent that we are in a stable condition and actually much better able to weather this storm than many other charities.

We are taking these challenges extremely seriously and looking at all possible avenues of funding and saving even more closely than we usually do, as well as continuing to work on behalf of you all.

As our very valued volunteers and in light of our commitment to be a transparent board we felt that you should be made aware of this situation.

Thank you once again for your continued hard work and support.

Angela

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2012

I am very grateful to all of you who have sent in material for this Newsletter. I really do appreciate it, but we need more so please do send me news about your group, fundraising, conferences, poems or anything you think others would like to hear.

I don't know about you but I never cease to be amazed that SOBS works! I don't really know how but I do know that our groups are valuable and work. We meet and chat and leave feeling better. Some in my group say that the group keeps them going for the next month. One lady told me it keeps her sane. Whatever it is, we are grateful to Alice Middleton for starting SOBS. We were wondering what to do to attract more men to our meeting and then in December we had five, one third of our group. It was great.

Another year has passed with its challenges and heartaches. I trust 2012 will be a better year, a good year for us all.

Ann Culley
Surrey group Leader
sobs.news@googlemail.com

IASP CONFERENCE, BEIJING, CHINA

Gill Green attended the recent World Congress on Suicide Prevention in Beijing, where she presented work submitted for her PhD – the Dissemination of Suicide Prevention Training (STORM) across three sites in the North West of England. Gill found the conference inspiring and educational with presentations from world renowned researchers.

The conference was also a success because of the opportunity to link up with colleagues, old and new, to share knowledge and experiences about suicide and self harm. As Gill comments, the most inspirational is the important work in postvention, and the growing movement of those bereaved, along with survivors of suicide who are informing research and practice.

"This conference has been inspirational. I have had the pleasure of meeting people who are making a difference in their communities by supporting people bereaved by suicide – their passion and energy is truly inspirational. Postvention is happening across the



world, and the conference brought people working in the field together to share experiences, research and practice. Postvention is important: it is a practical response to a suicide that

provides positive action in the form of much needed emotional support. It helps those bereaved, and the community come to terms with a tragic loss."



John & Jean Peters

John and Jean Peters attended the conference from the UK. Both volunteer on the telephone helpline and run two support groups for a national charity. Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS) is a charity that

encourages self-support to those bereaved by suicide. The main work of the charity features a national helpline which is available 9am to 9pm every day and also approximately 40 support groups across the country.

John has also co-written a handbook for those supporting people bereaved by suicide, and will be providing more details about this and his work in a future article.

For anyone bereaved by suicide, there is support. Please contact the Helpline on 0844 561 6855. For more information please visit the SOBS website: <http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk>

The Great Highland Hike

We raised £795.38 for SOBS through our workplace, The Royal Bank of Scotland and the Scottish Community Foundation.

To give you some background on what we did to raise these funds we completed part of the West Highland



Way. The route incorporates the most challenging and spectacular sections of the Caledonian Challenge, including the infamous 'Devil's Staircase' and

will raise money for communities close to the course and throughout the UK. Half of the funds raised are donated to local charities nominated by Participants. A further 25% will be distributed to community groups throughout Scotland. The remainder used by the Scottish Community Foundation to support its much needed charitable work.

We also raised money through a quiz night, raffle and cake and bake sale. We were asked to choose one charity to donate half the funds and I suggested SOBS as although I haven't had any close dealings with the charity I lost my Uncle David to suicide when I was 11 years old. We had been brought up in a very close family and his death at only 22 was a very tragic and sad time for me and my whole family.

When looking at various charities I identified with a lot of the experiences of people helped by SOBS. Although I was young at the time the feelings described by some of the survivors' testimonies really struck a chord. Suicide can be and still is a very taboo subject for some and the feelings of loss, guilt and shame can be overwhelming.

Hearing how the group has helped people and continues to do so made the decision to donate very easy. I think the charity does a great job as to speak to someone who has been through the experience themselves can make someone see sense of the

situation and raise awareness that you're not alone in how you are feeling. David's death still affects me and the person I am today but I can now look back to what a good person he was and the thought of him kept me going through the day of the walk.

I hope the good work of the charity continues and hope our donation can help in whatever way.

Lynsey Cairney

Tour d'Etape 2011

At the beginning of 2011, I had the crazy idea to challenge myself; I had only recently begun a new job at Sky and felt that a different kind of challenge in my personal life was required too – sad I know!

Only a few days before the closing date, Sky advertised le Tour d'Etape 2011 – a cycle along a stage of the Tour de France. At the time I thought it's only cycling so...full of gusto I got to typing and applied for this extraordinary experience.

After a few tumultuous weeks, it was confirmed and I was in. Now I had the chance to do something out of the ordinary; to immerse myself in something that wasn't football for a change but it turns out it may not be quite so straightforward. 200km in 40 degree heat! Let me try to put this crazy challenge into context: I haven't owned a bike in about 10 years. This event requires a road bike – not a mountain bike – before March I had NEVER ridden, never mind owned one of these types of bikes.

Since last April (when I stopped playing 5-a-side) I have not done any physical activity apart from maybe the odd trip downstairs to the fridge! According to my doctor I was officially overweight and I had never walked 12.9 miles never mind ride 129!



The Etape this year is in two stages. I am talking the 2nd stage – Issoire to St. Flour on July 17th. This may mean nothing to you but tune in to the Tour de France on July 10th and you will see the professionals struggle to make it up the ascents of the Col du Perthus (1309m), the Co du Prat de Bouc (1392m) and Col du Pras de Peyrol (1589m)!

The initial objective of this crazy idea was completely self-motivated but I have since decided that someone could benefit from my pain, so I have decided to break my duck for a local charity (SOBS) that doesn't get much publicity. This charity aims to provide support for those affected by suicide.

Sky promises to match money raised through this campaign which is an incentive for me to raise as much money as possible!

Book Reviews

After the Suicide – Helping the Bereaved to Find a Path from Grief to Recovery – by Kari Dyregrov, Einar Plyhn and Gudrun Dieserud

After the Suicide is one of the best books I have read on the subject of suicide. It covers pretty well all you want to know about suicide. Although it doesn't tax one's brain it is a work of some depth. It is simply written and easy to read.

The effect of the trauma of suicide on family and friends is well described and a considerable amount of practical advice is given including international website links, other bodies available to offer help and details of research papers.

The authors use the testimonies of those bereaved by suicide thus providing understanding and information for both the survivor and those seeking to help them.

Chapter 6 discusses the reactions of children and young people to a loss through suicide; a group often overlooked. It discusses their reactions and how adults can help them.

Chapter 12 faces another subject not usually discussed in books on suicide loss that is different ways of explaining suicide.

This book will be invaluable to those seeking to help those bereaved by suicide and will also be very helpful to survivors themselves. The book itself seeks to show that grief can lead to growth and development.

The following book reviews have been sent in:

Overcoming Grief – Sue Morris (295 pages)

Sue Morris is a clinical Psychologist who until recently ran the Bereavement Department of Old Colony Hospice in Boston, USA.

This is an excellent self-help guide using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques. This practical guide helps the recently bereaved to regain a sense of control and offers tried and tested strategies to adjust to life after bereavement.

Grief in Children – Atle Dyregrov (200 pages)

Dr. Atle Dyregrov is Director of the Centre for Crisis Psychology in Bergen, Norway. This is a handbook for adults and explains children's understanding of death at different ages and provides information on how adults around them can best help them to cope.

Grief in Young Children – Atle Dyregrov (95 pages)

This book complements the above book and aims to support children of up to about 8 years old.

Suicide Rates Rise as Debts and Cuts take their Toll

Suicide rates have risen sharply since the banking Crisis as people struggle to cope with the debt, unemployment and public service cuts. Britain fared worse than average, with an eight per cent rise in suicides between 2007 and 2009 – a shock after

almost a decade of annual declines, according to research in The Lancet.

Countries that have a fair benefits system and strong programmes to help people back into work early have historically avoided suicide spikes during recession.

The Independent publishes through Therapy Today

After the Suicide, Helping the Bereaved to Find a Path from Grief to Recovery by Kari Dyregrov, Einar Plyhn and Gudrun Dieserud

This is one of the best books I have read on suicide. Those bereaved by suicide have many questions and feelings, especially of guilt. This book seeks to help people to understand why suicide happens, the various reactions that are felt and how to come to terms with it.

The book starts with an overview of grief which is very helpful and shows how suicide grief is different from other forms of grief. The next few chapters give practical advice on how to cope with the trauma of suicide within families and for individuals. It is especially good that children and young people are included in this book. Other forms of support and social helps are also discussed. The penultimate chapter deals with growth after suicide, an area that it often not addressed in other books. This is good because it helps the reader to understand that not only can they recover but they can grow and be useful in life. The final chapter is equally unusual and is entitled 'Why Suicide?' It seeks to 'review a modern psychological understanding of the factors that may contribute to suicide'. Many will find this helpful as they question 'Why?'

New Groups in 2012

Wirral Group

A support group has opened in Wirral following a significant number of calls from that area to the national helpline. CALM, a charity supporting young men who suffer with depression, awarded the Wirral group a £1,000 grant. This gift allowed SOBS to rent a room at the Lauries Centre on Cloughton Road on the third Monday of each month at 7 pm. It is free to attend.

For more information contact 0151 652 9089.

Potential new group to be opened during 2012 in **Suffolk** for further details contact the National Office.

Newsletter

This newsletter has been sponsored by the donation from Andy Treasure and also a donation from the Ilkeston Support Group.

If you feel your support group would like to sponsor the June newsletter please contact Eric at the National Office 0115 944 1117.

BOOK OF LIFE

Your book of life began with hope
With dreams of happiness
I wanted you to have the moon
And a wealth of happiness
And I was blessed.

Your early days soon flew away
And the boy became the man
Sensitive, kind and funny
I was your greatest fan
And on summer ran.

Then suddenly a lightning struck
And my world crashed to the floor
Your book of life had ended
And the pages turned no more
And my soul was raw.

And the moon and stars surrendered
As the sun began to break
My dream was of your wedding day
Not being at your wake
And my tears ache

And time will never heal this heart
Or mend my hopes and fears
Nor will it fill your empty space
Or banish every tear
And I want you here.

I want to see your smiling face
And feel our hands entwine
I want to shower you with kisses
And embrace a love divine
And then peace will be mine

Submitted by Sheila B.

Dates for you Diary

Kent Retreat Weekend 23rd to 25th March 2012 will be held at the Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, Kent. The programme for the weekend will be very relaxed, to give time for those who want to explore or just chat and chill with friends. Depending on the weather people can take a walk through the beautiful Kent countryside, or take a magical 10 mile ride on the vintage steam train to the magnificent castle at Bodiam.

For more information and to book please call Sheila at the Maidstone Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide group.

The SOBS London Support Day will be on Saturday 16th June 2012. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please email londonsobs@gmail.com or telephone 020 8675 5862 (10am to 4pm) or 020 8886 6594.

The SOBS Surrey Support Day will be on Saturday 19th May 2012. Please contact Ann on 07851 420 526 for more details.

The Birmingham Support Day

We have now held fourteen successful conferences at Birmingham and have made arrangements for our 15th event. We offer you the opportunity to meet others bereaved by suicide, with the aim of gaining support and help by sharing feelings in a constructive and positive atmosphere.

We are pleased to welcome as our speakers this year:-

Dr Christabel Owens is Principal Healthcare Scientist at the Devon Partnership NHS Trust. Following a suicide, it is common for family members to have feelings of guilt and to blame themselves for 'failing' to spot warning signs. Christabel will draw on evidence to show that warning signs are not always present and even when present they can be difficult to interpret and act on.



Dr Michelle Flood Howard is an Educational and Child Psychologist with the Health Service Executive in Ireland. Her recent thesis for her PhD was an investigation into the impact of suicide bereavement among families bereaved by suicide. This will be the basis of her talk.



John Coyle, the former leader of the Cardiff group of Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide will chair the meeting.

The Support Day this year will be held at the **Carrs Lane Church Centre B4 7SX** and will be held on May 12th 2012 from 9:30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The cost will be £30, which includes coffee/tea and a buffet lunch. The venue is less than a ten minute walk from New Street Station, Birmingham.

Please contact **John Peters on 01828 830480 or email john@johnpeters.freeserve.co.uk**

Gloucester Retreat 19th to 21st October 2012. For further information contact Trish on 01452 371945.

Bolton Retreat 14th to 16th September 2012 at the Franciscan Friary, Pentasaph, North Wales. For further information contact Janet or Noel on 01942 201744.

Some sad news, Elizabeth Treasure passed away last year and will be sadly missed by all who knew her. Elizabeth worked relentlessly to set up a new group in Weston Super Mare and was an inspiration to all. Elizabeth's husband, Andy, kindly donated monies to our charity which has been put towards help support the publication of our Newsletter.

