Suicide: How We Can Help

I understand that talking about suicide can be a very scary topic. However, because of our Catholic values of the importance of life from conception to natural death we are called to help those suffering with suicidal thoughts. First we need to understand suicide a bit more. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (afsp.org) states "there is no single cause of suicide. It most often occurs when stressors and mental health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness and despair." The actively suicidal period is often a short time. If we are able to recognize the warning signs and take action, people can get through this tough time and get help through medication and or counseling.

We need to understand the warning signs. First, pay attention to what people say. If they state feelings of hopelessness or that there is no reason for them to live, ask them directly if they are thinking of killing themselves. You will not put the idea in their head. Second warning sign is withdrawing from friends, family, and activities they once enjoyed. Third, increase drug or alcohol use. Fourth, sleeping too much or too little. Fifth, aggression which leads to pushing people away. Sixth, giving away of possessions and saying good byes. Now that you have a greater understanding of the warning signs of suicide, we will talk about how you can help.

One of the most important things is to validate their feelings of sadness. It is tempting to try and talk them out of their feelings by saying things like "things are not that bad" or "but your life is good." If you are able to listen without judgement, people will feel heard and understood. This will lead them to talking more about their feelings. Make sure you are talking with them in a private place so they feel safer in opening up. Tell them you care about them and share that there are ways to help them to feel better.

If the person does state that they do want to kill themselves, ask if they have a plan. The more developed their plan the higher they are at risk for attempting a suicide. Stay with the person. Remove any lethal means (remove firearms and pills for example). A great resource if you don't know what to do is to call the National Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-8255. Another option is to take the person to the emergency room where a health care professional can assess their suicidal risk.

Helping people through their period of hopelessness by truly listening to their thoughts and feeling without judgement can help them to feel understood. Listening can then help you assess the warning signs to see if further actions is needed on your part. It is best to be cautious and seek professional help either through the National Suicide Prevention Line listed above or a health care professional at the emergency room if you are not sure they will be safe.

Barb Boesl, Clinical Therapist
We are in our 97th year of providing crucial services, which is an exciting time for our agency. We have grown to over 60 workers while still maintaining a comparatively low overhead to help serve those in need throughout the state of North Dakota. Thank you for your generosity and engagement, for spreading the word, and for sharing the great programs of Catholic Charities. You have truly made a difference by helping us to finally launch:

**Guardianship Expansion** – for over 30 years we have had a guardianship program for adults with intellectual disabilities. In recent years we have received more and more inquiries about offering guardianship services that can serve others in great need who do not qualify as having intellectual disabilities. In February we received an opportunity in the Devils Lake area to take over the practice of another guardianship provider and establish a new program of Guardianship Services for the Vulnerable (GSV). This can include individuals who need help making good decisions due to mental health issues or the elderly with diminished capacity. Currently we are limited to the Devils Lake area, but it is the start of something great for people in need across the state.

**Counseling Expansion** – led by our program director Melissa Lee-Eckes, MSW, LCSW, we have hired new mental health professionals to start working in our Minot, Dickinson, and Bismarck locations. One of these counselors, Dr. Della Martinsen in our Minot office, becomes our first new team member who is a licensed psychologist. Her additional training and expertise will allow us to help meet the need for good affordable counseling services in Minot and the surrounding area, as well as offering more comprehensive services than ever before in our counseling program.

We cannot be more thankful or grateful for your continued support! None of the above could have occurred without our generous supporters right here in North Dakota. More changes await us soon. Enjoy this issue of The Networker, and please stay tuned to hear further developments in our upcoming spring appeal letter!
Happy Social Work Month!

March is recognized as National Social Work month to dedicate and celebrate social workers around the country who commit their lives to providing invaluable services to those in need. Around the nation, approximately 680,000* social workers play an integral part in empowering and supporting children and families in all walks of life.

Thank You to all fellow social workers around the world, and those here in our community, thank you for your passion and commitment in working with the bravest, most vulnerable populations across the nation. Each day, I have the opportunity to work with amazing staff, and I couldn’t be more grateful for the constant drive and dedication they give to the AASK program. I am truly honored to be a part of such a compassionate, creative, and hard-working group of professionals who put their heart and soul into their work every day. Thank you, all, for everything you do. I am so proud!

Adults Adopting Special Kids Staff

As a collaborative program between Catholic Charities North Dakota (CCND) and PATH, ND, the AASK program is made up of a wonderful team of social workers who deserve a huge recognition! They are:

- Ambree Schmidt, CCND
- Bailey Kitko, PATH ND
- Bethany III, PATH ND
- Brittney Engelhard, PATH NN
- Darcy Solen, PATH ND
- Doreen Cerkowniak, CCND
- Elisa Samuelson, CCND
- Kelsey Schultz, PATH ND
- Kristen Curl, PATH ND
- Lindsay Fleming, PATH ND
- Maria Heidrich, PATH ND
- Marisa Austinson, CCND
- Megan Robbins, CCND
- Micaela Haider, CCND
- Michaela Robertsdahl, PATH ND
- Molly Schaefer, CCND
- Morgan Nemat, PATH ND
- Nancy Germain, CCND
- Nancy Goellner, PATH ND
- Nicole Fearing, PATH ND
- Sara Renfrew, CCND
- Savanna Braathen, CCND
- Sharlotte Grote, PATH ND
- Sherie Madewell-Buesgens, PATH ND
- Tara Olson, CCND
- Tesia Miller, CCND
- Vanessa Deibert, PATH ND

Take a peek at some of the feedback AASK has received regarding their services!

- Our worker was absolutely wonderful throughout this whole process. Thank you so much!
- The AASK team was amazing! Our worker is sincere and is genuinely invested in the well-being of her clients.
- Our family is truly blessed to have had such an amazing support through AASK. We simply cannot say enough about our worker...she is not only professional, she is caring and kind, and brings a sense of peace and understanding to the table.
- Our worker was so amazing to work with... She is such a strong asset. Thank you to her!
- It is always a pleasure to work with the AASK workers. They are great team players! I look forward to working with them again.
- Everyone involved in this process was amazing! I am so very thankful... I learned a lot in this process. Thank you!

If you come in contact with a social worker this month, I encourage you to thank them for the wonderful work they do every day. Happy Social Work Month!

Kara Eastlund, Director of Adults Adopting Special Kids

*National Association of Social Workers, 2019 (www.socialworkers.org)
Outreach to Expecting Mothers

Reaching out to mothers in need is the top priority in the Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services (PPAS) Program at Catholic Charities North Dakota; making sure that when someone finds themselves in need due to an unexpected pregnancy, they know just where to turn. But how do women find out about our services?

The majority of referrals to the Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services (PPAS) program come from word of mouth, either someone’s friend or family member has told them about the great services offered by the program, or a trusted counselor or doctor has referred them to our agency. We love this! It means that those who have been involved in our program have had a great experience, and they want others to have that same great experience as they explore parenting and adoption services for themselves.

But what about those women who haven’t shared their pregnancy with anyone, the women who are feeling scared and confused as they face a challenge that they weren’t expecting at this time in their life? How are these women finding out about the options available to them? They are using the internet! The internet feels confidential, is easy to access, and has a plethora of information.

The PPAS Program is working towards having a strong on-line presence for this very reason. Our kind and caring professional social workers want to be easily accessible to those women who are seeking information and looking at options. We want to let them know from their first Google search that we are here for them, to walk this journey with them, and that we will not judge them, but will empower them in making life affirming decisions.

We continue to strengthen our website and have started purchasing on-line advertising to reach more women in need. If you would like to be a part of this internet outreach, we invite you to support our efforts with a financial donation designated towards the Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services (PPAS) program. Together, we can reach more women and support them as they plan for their future.

Fargo Caritas Award Luncheon Honors Dr. Lucho Espejo

On Tuesday, March 10, Dr. Lucho Espejo was awarded with the Caritas Award for his work in providing unselfish and compassionate medical care to all walks of life. Through the years, Dr. Espejo has used his medical skills to help those in need and to advocate for the poor.
Guardianship Program Expands

For the past several years, our Catholic Charities Sunday video has shared the goal of our Board and Executive Director to expand our guardianship program beyond serving people with intellectual disabilities to serving as guardian on behalf of vulnerable elderly persons, people who struggle with mental health issues and others. In January, an opportunity presented itself in the Devils Lake area to serve as guardian for 30 people whose current guardian was resigning in February. The Board approved this expansion of service and we were off and running!

In February, court hearings were held and Catholic Charities North Dakota was appointed guardian for these individuals. To insure continuity of services, we have hired their previous guardian on a temporary basis for the next several months as we hire a Director and a full-time guardianship worker for the Devils Lake region. Once these staff are on board, we will look at accepting referrals for our guardianship services in the Fargo region in addition to the Devil Lake area.

I have had the honor of working in our Guardianship Division for the past 30 years. Our guardianship team has received countless calls over the years from hospitals, nursing homes, human service centers, family members, attorneys and judges asking if we could serve as guardian for a person who was vulnerable and in desperate need of a guardian as he or she was at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. With this expansion of guardianship services, we have taken the first step in meeting this need and we are very grateful to the Board and our Executive Director for taking this step!

In our existing Guardianship Program for individuals with intellectual disabilities, we also have wonderful news. Unfortunately we still have 125 people on our waiting list for services. Fifty (50) of these reside in the Fargo region. While we have four (4) full-time guardianship workers in our Fargo office, their caseloads are all full as they often serve up to 35 or 36 people each. To address this need, our Guardianship Program plans to hire an additional guardianship worker in our Fargo office. We plan to have this person ready to begin taking cases on July 1, 2020. By hiring a new guardianship worker, we will be able to make significant strides in reducing our waiting list and, more importantly, begin serving as guardian for more people with intellectual disabilities who have been waiting months or even years for our assistance and support!

Bismarck Caritas Award Luncheon Honors Marci Loomis

Catholic Charities North Dakota will be honoring Marci Loomis on Tuesday, May 12th at Spirit of Life Church in Mandan, ND. Marci will be recognized for her service to the poor and bringing hope back to the lives of individuals.

You are invited to join us in this celebration on May 12th. Please RSVP by May 5th by emailing dinner@catholiccharitiesnd.org, calling #701-235-4457 or visit our website at www.CatholicCharitiesND.org.
Tributes
Commemorative Gifts from October 1, 2019 to February 18, 2020

In Memory of
Bob McCaRip
Patrick Leier and Madge Leier
Anna Mary Bosch
Kim Birrenkott
Vernon J. Richter

Julia and Bernard Feldman
Larry & John Kropp
Ed Mauch
Kathy Kessler
Valentine Huschka
Shirley A. Summerville
Margie Harviell
Tony Gilles
My Parents
Gerald Vosika
Hermine and Clemence Lies
Mark Klosterman
Andrew Wambach
Arthur Wieland
All Souls in Purgatory

Grace and Tony Lill
Gordon Grinaker
Robert Heinle
Gerard Bogers
Don Van Hout

Tony Aquire
My Parents
Bryan
Arnetta and Roy Voeller
Irene and Joseph Petz
Gary Bergendahl
David Wade Smith
Florence Kraft

Mary and John Bittner
Beatrice and Alex Messner
Beverly Mellberg McKee

Daniel, Neal & James Bruner
Janice Carraba
Deceased family members
John B. Goroski
Rev. Tehodore F. Gustin
Larry Kraft

By
Maggie McCaRip
Sheila and Paul Leier
Sheila and Paul Leier
John Birrenkott
Paula and Mark Grueneich
Constance and John Andvik
Darlene Kropp
Ronald Mauch
Norman Kessler
Loretta Huschka
Thomas Summerville
Fran Allery
Audrey Gilles
Leon Steidl
Karen Vosika
Bernadette and George Lies
Theresa Klosterman
Beth and Bruce Slette
Dorothy Wieland
Noreen and Duane Andersen
David Lill
Georgia Grinaker
Sonia Heinle
Cindy and Norm Gabel
Selena and Mark Van Hout

In Memory of
Mary Ermer
Dale Nystrom
Carol Murray
James Kitsch
Robert Jodsaas
Our Parents
Lloyd Becker
Roger Kamletz
Alyce and Anton Jundt Johnson
Ted Gathman
Ann Bingham

Alice Bata
Randy Dusek
Donald Brouillard
Floretta and Pius Glass
Deceased Family & Friends
Jack and Ken Miller

Gerald and Douglas Simdorn
Elizabeth and George Rohr
Pauline and Frank Cherney
Mike Wolbaum

Jerome Dufault
Helen Eberle
Bishops Kinney and Zipfel

R. William Hill
John Murphy
Mom, Dad and Brother
Verlyn Nelson
Eileen Friesz
Deceased Allery and Brien Family Members

Lillian and Leo Bittner
Lillian and Leo Bittner
Kitty and Bernie Bachman
Rose Bruner
Jolena Hagen
Lois Vilandre
Gary Goroski
Barbara Steiner
Pam Kraft

By
Sandy Nystrom
Sandy Nystrom
Tamara Schmidt
Shirley Kitsch
Kathleen Jodsaas
Verena and Fritz Wolf
Deb and Lyle Lutman
Helene Kamletz
Demaris and Loren

Patricia Gathman
Sharon and James Eversvik
Patricia and Charles Bata
Brienna and Nick Dusek
Annette and James Hovey
Wilfred Eberle
Cindy and Rodger Wetzel

Ruth and Anthony Malaktaris
Kathy Anderson
Caroline Hauser
Lee Nelson
Della and Mike Friesz

Patty Allery
Maureen Munro
Marion Piatz
Marion Piatz
Barbara and Gabe Volk
Dorothy Zbed
Mary Ann Stack
Nancy Elliot
Kathy and Tom Heimbuch

In Memory of
Rev. Tehodore F. Gustin
Larry Kraft

Cora Wagner, granddaughter

Evelyn Hegle
Thank you for your thoughtful gifts in memory of, or in honor of, family and friends.

**In Memory of**
- Agatha and John Nett
- James Jamieson
- Brother John
- Deceased Hamley Family
- John Cicha
- Allen Kline
- Edward Brondu
- Katie Hughes
- Casper Schneider
- Eric Adamson
- Lawrence Ackerman
- Daniel Rimmereid
- Lethe Meyer
- Rita Fox
- Pam Norman
- Sonia Heinle
- Michael Gross
- Monica and Harlan Fixen
- Evelyn and Carl Haberman
- Shirley Feeney
- Sonia Heinle
- Ron Frost
- Gordon, Maria, Anthony, And Elsa Bankers
- Sonia Heinle
- Sonia Heinle
- Sonia Heinle
- Sonia Heinle
- Sonia Heinle
- Sonia Heinle
- Joseph J Gerszewski
- Joseph J Gerszewski

**By**
- Paulette and Alvin Nett
- Mary Jane and Duane Breitling
- Kathy and Terry Daucavage
- Shirley Hamley
- Karen and Joseph Cicha
- Colleen Stebbins
- Isabelle Hughes
- Connie and Jason Schneider
- Terry Shellnut
- Jeanette and Steven Ackerman
- Jeanette and Steven Ackerman
- Bernard Meyer
- Sharon and John Fox
- Cynthia and Timothy Senger
- Kaye Greenwood
- Lori and Steve Gross
- Kathleen Smith
- Mary and Roger Haberman
- Charles Feeney
- Jan Lees
- Lloyd and Margaret Thilmont
- Julie and Arnold Bankers
- Timothy and Carol Kachel
- Rod and Karen Wilhelmi
- Erly's J. McCullough
- Fardal
- Jason and Amanda Seykora
- Joel and Becky Jo Grasl
- Audrey Beauchamp
- Brian and Barbara Harmdierks
- Cory and Elisha Anderson
- Bryan and Gloria Jones
- Constance Gerszewski
- Linda and Gary Babinski
- Delano and Rosemary Grimestad
- Lucielle and Jake Dosch
- Shari Obritsch
- Helen and John Dittus
- Lawrence Bernhardt
- Helen and Eugene Fitzgerald
- Family members
- Our daughter
- Our Family
- Brady & Mark Bommersbach
- Deacon Paul Schneider
- Rev. Bernie Schneider
- Barb & Craig Ritter Family
- Our Popes, Priests and Seminarians
- Chayce
- Lonnie and Riel Family
- Delaine Hilzendeger
- Fr. Russ Kovash
- Fr. Greg Luger
- Kelly and David Schroeder Family
- Randy and Johnny Allmaras
- Shirley Kitsch
- Elizabeth Nilles
- Christian Calloway
- Fr. Gary Benz
- Thomas D. Grimestad
- Jodie and Lonney Scherr
- Dennis Meyer
- Joe Dittus
- James and Sharon Holter
- Helen-Jeanne Puvogel
- Connie and Silas Rawls
- Judi and Jerry McDonald
- Sue and Kellan Pauly
- Carol and Ron Bommersbach
- Helen Kram
- Kathleen Potts
- Betty and Pat Obrigewitch
- Lorie and Tom Sieg
- Patty Allery
- Marian and Charles Suda
- Valentina Tweeter
- Paula and Dwight Richter
- Paula and Dwight Richter
- Fr. Timothy Schroeder
- Dianne Allmaras
- Charlotte and Nick Kitsch
- Charlotte and Nick Kitsch
- Marilyn H. Tucker
- Lefor Christian Mothers
May our Former Directors Rest in Peace

In our 97 years as an agency we have only had 10 directors. In recent months, two of our former directors passed away. In November of 2019, Fr. Gerald McCarthy passed away. He earned a master’s degree in social work before serving our agency from 1969-1974, while we were known as Catholic Family Service.

In February of 2020, Larry Bernhardt also passed away. He was a licensed social worker who served as director of Catholic Charities North Dakota from 2010-2013.

Both will be missed greatly!

Catholic Charities North Dakota
Guided by our values, Catholic Charities North Dakota serves people in need and advocates for the common good of all.