

2025 HOPES Award Winner – Sue Mitchell Metz



Sue is an unwavering advocate for mental health, suicide awareness, and grief support, tirelessly working to eliminate the stigma surrounding these critical issues. Through her professional roles, volunteer work, and personal journey, Sue has profoundly impacted individuals and families navigating mental health challenges, crisis situations, and the grief of losing a loved one to suicide.

With a background as a registered nurse and EMT, Sue holds degrees in Organizational Leadership and Thanatology. Her professional expertise is matched only by her compassion and dedication to those in need. As the Executive Coordinator for NAMI Fond du Lac County and the Care for Caregivers Program Coordinator at SSM Health, she provides essential education, advocacy, and support services. In her role with NAMI, she facilitates many of their signature programs and is diligent in recruiting additional facilitators to reach more community members who otherwise may not receive information on mental health, mental illness, and suicide awareness. She facilitates support groups for survivors of suicide loss, individuals struggling with mental health conditions, individuals struggling with their grief, and children grieving the loss of a parent or sibling. Sue's commitment extends to leading grief workshops, crisis response, and offering public education to a wide array of audiences, including schools, hospitals, churches, law enforcement agencies, and legal professionals. Sue has been asked to be the keynote speaker for several events, including a Veteran Gala and has been panelist for several different national conferences.

After her son's death by suicide, Sue identified a critical need in the Fond du Lac area, which had higher suicide deaths than the national norm. In response, she founded the first Survivors of Suicide Loss support group in Fond du Lac, WI, providing a safe and understanding space for those grieving such losses. Her efforts have created a vital resource for the community, ensuring no one has to endure this pain alone.

Beyond her professional obligations, Sue dedicates herself to spreading awareness through public speaking engagements and media outreach, including radio and television interviews. By bravely sharing her own lived experience, she brings comfort, guidance, and hope to others who are struggling, ensuring that no one has to navigate grief or mental health challenges alone.

Sue's advocacy is deeply personal. As a survivor of suicide loss, she honors the memory of her beloved son, Ryan, who died by suicide at the age of 30. Her work stands as a testament to his life and a commitment to preventing other families from enduring similar pain. Sue's passion, resilience, and dedication have made an immeasurable impact on countless lives, and her efforts continue to foster a more compassionate and informed society.

This is what a colleague of Sue's had to say about her when nominating her for a local recognition for an individual that demonstrated resiliency after trauma:

"I am honored to nominate Sue for her extraordinary advocacy work in the areas of grief, loss, and suicide awareness. After experiencing the tragic loss of her son to suicide, Sue has demonstrated incredible strength by turning her personal pain into a mission to spread awareness and provide support to others facing similar heartbreak. Her tireless dedication to this cause has empowered countless individuals and families to navigate their own grief, creating a lasting impact on the community. As someone who has also experienced the loss of a loved one to suicide, I have been deeply moved and inspired by Sue's work. Her unwavering commitment to spreading awareness and offering a beacon of hope to others in times of darkness speaks volumes about her resilience and passion for making a difference. Sue's advocacy is not just an extension of her own healing, but a vital service that is helping to change the conversation around mental health and suicide prevention. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this recognition, as Sue's efforts continue to lift up others and make our community a more compassionate and understanding place."

In addition to her professional and advocacy roles, Sue is a loving wife to Steve, a devoted mother to her children—Ryan, Mariah, and Brydan—and a proud grandmother to Cyanne, who brings joy and light into her life. When she is not working or volunteering, she enjoys camping and spending time with her family.

Sue Mitchell Metz exemplifies the spirit of the HOPES Award through her tireless work in mental health advocacy, suicide prevention, and grief support. Her commitment to reducing stigma, educating the public, and offering hope to those in crisis makes her a truly deserving recipient of this esteemed honor.