

2019 HOPES Award Winners

Community for Hope of Greater Oshkosh, Inc.



For 18 years, Community for Hope of Greater Oshkosh, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, has provided suicide prevention training and services to those affected by suicide in Winnebago County. The organization was developed as a direct result of community shock following the loss of 10 youth to suicide in 20 months ending in 2001. This epidemic created a series of meetings where community members created Community for Hope and offered Yellow Ribbon training to all school personnel and other youth workers in Oshkosh. The result was a stepping stone for an organization that has endured for 18 years and expanded to include monthly Survivors of Suicide Loss groups in two sites in Winnebago County, suicide prevention folders for every student in Winnebago County, and eventually QPR training on demand for organizations in Winnebago County. Zero Suicide philosophy has expanded CFH's influence with other organizations that have tangential suicide interests. Most recently CFH has been involved in Winnebago County's Child Death review team and an offshoot development of a Suicide Investigation form for use by Law Enforcement and Coroners offices to gather more detailed data on adult suicides. Community for Hope is led by Executive Director Debbie Peters.



Community for Hope has dedicated itself to initiating the best practice and evidence-based programs in suicide prevention for the past 18 years in Winnebago County. Community for Hope is the only organization serving Winnebago County for the sole purpose of suicide prevention, intervention and grief support. Some of the more distinctive accomplishments of Community for Hope are:

- Collaboration of over 150 QPR trainings and more than 5,000 people trained in Winnebago County.
- Facilitated the training of over 110 QPR Instructors within their tri-county area.
- Assisted training of multiple school district staff after initial QPR training, expanding to reach all public and parochial schools in Winnebago County.
- More than 10,000 Student Folders produced and delivered, primarily to high school freshman.
- Over 15 years of monthly Survivors of Suicide Loss grief support meetings facilitated by professionally trained counselors hosted in two cities within Winnebago County. These efforts have expanded to all age groups.
- Development and implementation of postvention suicide protocol for each loss by suicide in cooperation with the Winnebago County Coroner's office, public and parochial schools, funeral homes, and religious leaders.
- Provided funding to allow their Executive Director to be trained as an instructor of Adult Mental Health First Aid. She is the first/only instructor of AMHFA in the county.
- Produced fundraising events and successful grant proposals that have raised enough money to support 18 years of programming. They have one full-time Executive Director, and stipend multiple professional counselors/therapists to facilitate a wide variety of programs.
- Most recently trained and are using the Network for Good fundraising program as promoted for nonprofits from the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, Bemis, Oshkosh Corp and JJ Keller Foundation.

Shel Gross



Shel has been an integral partner in building capacity to develop Wisconsin's current suicide prevention infrastructure. He has been a leader in convening key stakeholders to ensure all statewide and local efforts are aligned. Because of Shel's leadership and vision, suicide prevention coordinators from several states look to Wisconsin for guidance on sustaining local prevention efforts, advocating for policy, and developing plans to train healthcare organizations in Zero Suicide. He has provided resources and served as a wealth of information to our county suicide prevention coalitions.

A reviewer noted, "Shel has not only secured funding for statewide initiatives, not only helped plan, host, and present at conferences, but he has created change on a large scale through public policy. His efforts will clearly have a lasting impact in the state of Wisconsin for years to come." Many mental health advocates have said that Shel brought the human aspect to public policy.

Shel has been a resource and a mentor for many of us involved in suicide prevention work here today and many more outside of this room. Maybe most notably, as referenced by people who have worked alongside Shel, he believes in the power and importance of human relationships and embodies that value.

Shel served as Director of Public Policy for Mental Health America of Wisconsin from 2000 until his retirement in 2018. He is a former member and chair of the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health and its Legislative and Policy Committee. Shel served as Co-Chair of Prevent Suicide Wisconsin, board member of the Wisconsin Prevention Network, Co-Chair of Wisconsin United for Mental Health, a statewide anti-stigma initiative, and Co-Chair of the Survival Coalition of WI Disability Organizations. Shel was Project Manager for statewide grants from the WI Department of Health Services which focus on suicide prevention and formerly managed Wisconsin's federal Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention grants. Shel served as Co-Chair of a Wisconsin advocacy coalition promoting the passage of our mental health parity bill in 2010.

Shel has truly proven himself as a servant and passionate advocate in the policy, education, and prevention services fields. His exceptional dedication to the work of suicide prevention continues as he remains engaged in the work of Zero Suicide as the Training Coordinator for Mental Health America of Wisconsin.