

Standing against suicide

Fundraiser puts L.E.A.R.N. prevention method on display

BY BRENDA KAY NETH

On Nov. 30, the fourth annual fundraiser for Forefront, Innovations in Suicide Prevention, took place in the University of Washington's HUB Ballroom. More than 700 guests were given the opportunity to sign up for free suicide prevention classes sponsored by Forefront, and were encouraged to make donations toward the operating budget for Forefront in 2016-2017. Over \$250,000 in donations came through corporate, matching, as well as through individual contributions throughout the evening and over 250 people agreed to the free training.

At each table were business cards explaining the acronym L.E.A.R.N. — Listen Empathize, Ask about Suicide, Remove the Danger, and Next Level of Care. Each letter represented the steps taken when a loved one, colleague, or friend says they are suicidal.

Dr. Jen Stuber, executive director of Forefront, said L.E.A.R.N. should be as "well-known and practiced as CPR and the Heimlich maneuver."

Forefront has spearheaded five legislative rulings in regard to suicide prevention, including House Bill 1138 for work within higher education and House Bill 2793. The latter bill provides for the creation of the Suicide Safer Homes Task Force. This includes collaboration with firearms retailers and pharmacists and instructs them on how to form conversations about suicide prevention with their customers.

Stuber and Forefront helped lobby for the first law in the na-

tion requiring that all medical professionals and mental health professionals have mandated training on suicide prevention. The 2012 law, known as Adler's law, was named after Matthew Adler, Stuber's husband, who killed himself in 2011.

Trudi Inslee opened the evening to much applause when discussing the Executive Order signed by her husband, Gov. Jay Inslee, earlier this year. She spoke highly about the initiative taken by the Washington Suicidal Prevention Action Alliance, emphasizing the state's willingness to address the impact of guns and suicide on a broad scale.

"I am impressed by all the dedicated people who are leading the path forward," Trudi Inslee said.

Brandon Hadi, a recent University of Washington graduate, spoke about how his career changed once he lost his friend to suicide 17 months earlier. Hadi is co-founder of the API Mental Health and Wellness Summit as well as a community organizer for Forefront. Hadi urged everyone to learn about suicide prevention through free trainings presented by Forefront. He stated that it wasn't until the death of his friend that he came to see himself outside of parental expectations. He is now committing himself to work in the mental health field.

Bill Radke, radio talk show host, discussed the need for more media coverage on suicide and prevention. Radke said that he lost his brother Brooks to suicide, and that he hadn't sensed any warning signs about his brother's mental health.

Five awards were presented before the dinner, acknowledging



Photos by Fischer Wallace Swae Photography

ABOVE: Rapper One 2 and Sam Foster performed in the University of Washington's HUB ballroom for the fourth annual Forefront fundraiser.

LEFT: Dr. Jennifer Stuber is the executive director of Forefront.



those considered champions in the suicide prevention community. Frank Chopp (D-43rd District) accepted the first-time Legislator of the Year Award for helping to create bipartisan support for six suicide prevention bills. He acknowledged the support of Representative Tina Orwall as well as Senator Joe Fain (R-Auburn) and Representative Brian Blake (D-Aberdeen), both who received Special Recognition.

KIRO News Deborah Horne accepted the Excellence in Coverage of Mental Health and Suicide Award for Monique Ming Laven's news segment Pushing for Change and Michelle Millman's interview with Jennifer

Stuber about suicide myths and the Safer Homes Bill. Representative Tina Orwall (D-33rd district) presented the Tina Orwall Public Service Award to Debbie Reisart. Reisart received a standing ovation for her work with Packwood and Greater Lewis County. Reisart was featured in a seven-minute film during the evening called "Full Circle." In the film, Reisart discusses the death of her 14-year-old grandson Brian Stephens, who took his life by using an unsecured rifle in 2009.

"Seven years ago, I could never have imagined this day," Reisart said. "This work is hard — it requires a lot of partnership. I was lucky I had Forefront's support to come together, and collaborate to find solutions."

Micia Vergara received the Emerging Leader Award for her work as president of Husky Suicide Prevention and Awareness,

which included bringing in therapy dogs and managing the Husky Help and Hope walk for 700 participants. This was the first time such an award has been given.

The Sue Eastgard Training Award was presented to Dr. Kate Comtois from UW. Dr. Comtois was recognized for her suicide prevention training in CAMS (Collaborative Assessment and Management for Suicidality) and DBT (Dialectical Behavioral Therapy.)

Flamenco guitarist and suicide loss survivor Ethan Deutsch offered his talent in remembrance of his son early in the evening. Guitarist and singer Sam Foster and rapper One2 brought forth their musical talents in a collaborative effort called "Speak Up." The song prompted listeners to talk about depression when and if it comes.