

Turning a New Leaf



Volume 5, Issue 1

- Promoting healthy relationships and personal growth from a Christian perspective -

Fall 2012

Surviving Suicide Loss, Helping Others

by Terri Kasper, Marketing Communications Director



Terri Kasper (right) and her sister Sofia Collier at their brother's White Sox memorial brick.

She had been struggling for a couple of years, shared Dana Szymczak, who is a member of the New Leaf Resources' administrative team. "My sister-in-law had unexplained vertigo. She was constantly dizzy, couldn't drive, couldn't work," Dana said. "She went to the Cleveland Clinic, Northwestern and no one could explain her symptoms. She felt depressed, had issues with spending, was afraid to be alone, had no ambition." Dana's sister-in-law had mentioned suicide many times, but refused to admit that her mental health was compromised. She blamed her physical ailments.

"One thing I know now," Dana said, "you can't ignore it when someone mentions suicide." Dana's sister-in-law killed herself just hours after agreeing to get help for what her family believes now was severe anxiety and major depression.

"You constantly battle the guilt," Dana shared. "Guilt I

feel knowing I knew she was going to do it and not forcing her to get help." Just days earlier, Dana's sister-in-law was stopped by a passerby seconds before running into traffic on a busy highway. After that incident, her family desperately tried to get her help. They watched her around the clock and finally had convinced her to go the hospital the next day. But when she had the opportunity, she snuck away and took her own life.

I can relate to Dana's story. I lost my brother to suicide after years of trying to get him appropriate treatment for what doctors said was major depression. After the first attempt, he promised me and my family that he wouldn't try again. He agreed to attend counseling and said he wanted to get his life back together.

But in hindsight, I don't think he was being honest with us or himself. I think the shame of the demons he battled was too much for him to admit to anyone. He quit going to counseling and didn't take his prescription. Old self-medicating habits kicked-in and he found himself in trouble with the law. But when he started dating and seemed happy for the first time in a long time, we hoped he had turned a corner.

I hadn't talked to my brother in over a month, when my parents called me late on a cold night in February, almost

five years ago. They told me that the police had been called to my brother's house. He had threatened his girlfriend and her son with a gun and was holed up inside not willing to come out. Huddled in our cars outside the home, police negotiated with him to no avail. He chose to end his life that night.

When someone dies by suicide you go through a variety of emotions from anger to despair. It takes a long time to process what has happened and to work through it. As Dana explained, "it was like I was in a fog for about a year." You question how a loved one could do this to their family and friends. It seems like such a selfish act. Then you blame yourself for not doing more and start with the "what ifs." What if I made him get treatment; what if I personally took him to counseling; what if I could have stopped him that night.

Fortunately for my family, we talked through the emotions and kept supporting each other during the grieving process. We sought out resources to help us cope with our loss. We participated in the AFSP's Out of Darkness Walk raising money for suicide prevention. We also made a donation in memory of my brother to the White Sox Charities and have a memorial brick in front of US Cellular Field. When we attend games we go see the brick and think back on the happier memories.

Resources for Coping with Suicide Loss

- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention afsp.org
- The Compassionate Friends compassionatefriends.org
- Alliance of Hope allianceofhope.org
- Suicide Grief Support Forum suicidegrief.com
- Families for Depression Awareness familyaware.org
- Survivors-Road2Healing road2healing.com
- Survivors of Suicide survivorsofsuicide.com
- Out of Darkness Walks afsp.org

Dana sought out counseling to help her cope while supporting her in-laws as they dealt with their loss. "Suicide can tear a family apart, especially when members won't communicate their feelings or seek professional help," Dana shared. "I would encourage anyone impacted by suicide to get help."

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Our Mission
New Leaf Resources promotes healthy relationships and personal growth through counseling, education, and consultation from a Christian perspective.

Thankful for the Many Supporters of New Leaf

With Thanksgiving fast approaching, we are reminded of the many blessings we see daily at New Leaf, and say thank you to:

- The **generous souls** who have given close to \$100,000 so far this year to the Marty Doot Client Assistance Fund - helping lessen the burden for those who are hurting.
- **Don Spender** who faithfully plows our Lansing office parking lot each winter for free.
- The awesome staff at **Great Lakes Bank** who prepare our quarterly newsletter mailing.
- **John Stob** who generously gives his time to maintain the landscaping at the Lansing location.



Volunteers prepare the Annual Fund Campaign which raises money for the Marty Doot Client Assistance Fund.

- Volunteers **Ken & Elaine Van Dellen, Deb Koster, Donna DeGraff** and **Jack & Carol Elzinga** (pictured above) who helped stuff and seal our Annual Fund Campaign appeal.
- The devoted **Board of Directors** and **Stated Clerk** who volunteer countless hours providing guidance and direction to the ministry and its mission.



Looking for an easy way to help? Here are some ideas!

1. **Pray** for those who seek care and those who provide it.
2. Use **GoodSearch.com & GoodShop.com** - this search engine donates a .01 per search & up to 37% of every purchase to New Leaf Resources.
3. Host a **Fundraiser** for New Leaf Resources - from garage sales to golf outings to penny wars, you, your group or school could partner with us to help raise funds.
4. Be a **Corporate Sponsor** - for CARE 360° or the Celebration Banquet.
5. **Volunteer** to help with **Mailings** 4 - 6 times per year, label, stuff envelopes.
6. **Spread the word** - tell a friend, your pastor, your club members about New Leaf Resources.
7. **Matching Gifts?** Does your company match your charitable contributions - you could double your giving to New Leaf.
8. **Like us on Facebook** and join the conversation.

For more ideas or information, please call Terri at (708) 895-7310 or email terri@newleafresources.org.

Surviving

(Continued from page 1)

Suicide Survivors' Day. The AFSP holds healing conferences all around the world. Locally, there are conferences being held in Chicago, Hammond and Chesterton. For more information, visit www.afsp.org.

Dana and I both joined New Leaf Resources shortly after our losses. We felt like it was a Godsend and believe that something good will always come out of something bad. We pray that by encouraging others to get the help and counseling they need, we might just save a life.

Understanding Anger and Overcoming Self-doubt

A client recently shared how her experience at New Leaf Resources has given her hope, help and healing.

"I was angry and didn't know why. (After seeking counseling) I have developed new skills in dealing with frustrations, understanding the sources of my anger and learning how to resolve those issues.

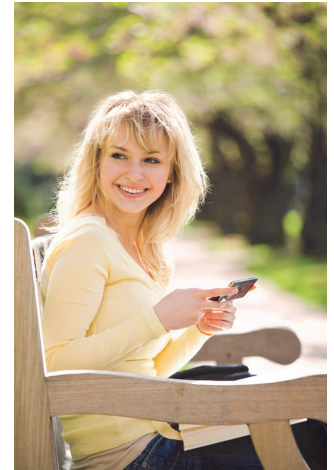
I have been able to view new circumstances with less fear and foreboding. I can approach others without fearing their response. I don't feel incapable of handling change.

I have learned how to regulate self talk better. I have learned how to be more open to new people and am better at evaluating the difference between harmful and harmless

circumstances. I have learned to value my own boundaries and my own choices without constant self-doubt.

New Leaf is a place of rest, reflection and revelation. Everyone is welcoming, supportive and clear in their expectations."

**- Janet, 47,
in counseling for
anger & depression**



What's "New" at New Leaf



Executive Director Terry Top (right) welcomes Board Member Ken Van Dellen to the new Crown Point office, for a recent board meeting and tour.

As our name states, we are always striving to provide helpful and educational **resources** to the community. Recently, we had the opportunity to partner with **FamilyFire** to write informative articles on topics concerning families and relationships from a mental health perspective.

These articles appear on FamilyFire's website and Facebook page.

FamilyFire is one of the gospel resources produced by ReFrame Media, the English language ministry of Back to God Ministries International. You can find them online at www.familyfire.com.

You can also find a variety of mental health resources, articles, links, books, screenings, personal testimonials, and more on our **newly updated ministry website:** www.newleafresources.org.

Resources for Churches

In the Christian community, New Leaf offers a variety of educational services, prevention programs, speaking opportunities, training and support. For our area churches we provide:

- **Training** for Elders, Deacons, Stephen Ministry, Church Leaders.
- **Guest speakers** for ministry groups such as MOP's, Coffee Break, GEM's Leaders, Youth Groups and others.
- **Sunday School/Bible Study** talks.
- **Bi-weekly Pastor's Support Group.**
- **Phone consultation** for pastors dealing with a difficult situation.

If you are interested in more information, contact Executive Director Terry Top at (708) 895-7310.

"I have learned to value my own boundaries and choices without constant self-doubt."
- Janet, a client

Save the Date

**Thursday,
April 18, 2013
Annual
Appreciation
Dinner**

*The Center for Visual
& Performing Arts in
Munster, Indiana*

Enjoy delicious food,
fellowship with friends
& celebrate the
many success stories
at New Leaf!

Save a tree
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When Should You Seek Help From a Counselor?



You should seek professional counseling if you feel unhappy, depressed, anxious or angry and it seems like nothing

you do on your own brings any relief. Sometimes, when a major life transition occurs, we feel as if we're "stuck" and we may need the input of an objective professional to help clarify where we are in our journey. Perhaps a friend or relative has even suggested that speaking to a counselor might help.

People often believe there is something terribly wrong with them if they struggle with these types of feelings, but that is not necessarily true. You shouldn't feel embarrassed or ashamed to

seek help. So, if you are struggling, we encourage you to make an appointment with a professional Christian counselor. You may need just a session or two to get you back on track. Seeking help early often prevents more complex problems from developing in the future. For more information, call New Leaf at (708)895-7310.

Not on Our Mailing List?

Sign up today to receive New Leaf Resources quarterly Newsletter full of helpful information, informative articles and stories of hope and healing. You can select print copy or email version. Sign up at www.newleafresources.org or email your request to the office at terri@newleafresources.org.



 **new leaf resources**
 hope. help. healing.

New Leaf Resources is...

A **professional mental health agency** which provides counseling services to individuals, families, couples, children, churches, schools and businesses.

A **ministry** which brings the best possible care to those we serve, striving to reflect God's grace and love to all who seek help.

A **community resource** offering educational services, prevention programs, training, support and coaching.