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CONTENTS

Director's Report - 1
Peter Neame - 2
World News - Consequences of Non-Treatment - 3
World News - Mental illness and violence in Seattle and D.C. - 4
Call for Survivors - 4
Suicide, sad but true - 5
I am so angry - 7
Hope - 8
A friend for me - my story - 9
Correspondence - 10
Board of Directors - 10
You can help - 11
Humour - 11,12

Coming Events

White Wreath Day
29 May 2014 - 11

WHITE WREATH ASSOCIATION Ltd®
Action Against Suicide
A.C.N. 117 603 442

E : white.wreath@bigpond.com
T : 1300 766 177
M: 0410 526 562
www.whitewreath.com
Head Office: PO Box 1078
Browns Plains, QLD 4118

Design and layout
Gigi Nixon | www.giginixon.com

Director's Report

The mental health policies of Australian federal governments, of both political persuasions, can only be described as abysmal.

Successive governments have announced reforms to the mental health system, promising radical changes.

Unfortunately, the end result seems to have achieved little. Politicians and mental health practitioners seem not to listen to the views of people who have had their loved ones taken away from them through suicide.

White Wreath Association does not receive any financial support from governments and relies on the generous public donations as we strive to achieve our ultimate goal of Safehaven Centres.

In fact, several years ago we were knocked back on a request for support from the state government.

Hope springs eternal, and we welcome the commitment of the new Tony Abbott Government to help young people facing mental health illness by establishing a National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health.

Mr Abbott announced an \$18 million mental health policy, which includes clinical trials to find new treatments for mental health illness in young people; research programs seeking to reduce deliberate self-harm and suicide; training and support for 12,000 mental health clinicians and service

planners by 2020; and 100 early psychosis and intervention centres nationally.

The policy also includes an assessment by the National Mental Health Commission on the effectiveness of all existing mental health programs in both government and non-government sectors.

I trust that in three years time I can report to you that these commitments have been achieved. Time will tell.

Many thanks to everyone who took part last month in "Sock It To Suicide Week", raising funds in support of White Wreath Association and help us combat our high suicide rate.

I hope you all had fun wearing brightly-coloured socks/stockings to your workplace, school etc.

Many thanks also to the people who responded to the questionnaire on whether we should continue with the Quarterly Newsletter. It was an overwhelming Yes.

As this is the last issue for the year, I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Fanita Clark
CEO

Peter Neame, Research Officer

White Wreath Association Ltd



More than 42 years ago I took up a fill-in job as a nurse-aide then called psychiatric nurse assistants at the now closed mental hospital of Seaview at Hokitika, New Zealand. At that stage Seaview had around 400 beds and was considered a “small” hospital.

That was in 1971 and throughout the world the push was on to close all mental hospitals to provide new enlightened and “humane care”. Most of the people that Seaview cared for and that every other mental hospital cared for are now refused care, left to suicide, or die on the streets or in prison. Why is that you may ask? The reason is very cynical and extremely tragic.

Cutting mental health care is easy because the voting public do not see it as an essential service like general medicine and long term care “institutions” terrible bins or lunatic asylums cost a lot of money to run.

Why do we need institutions? Because serious mental illness is a very serious

1. neurological illness that affects
2. the structure
3. the function
4. the chemistry
5. the electricity
6. that is chronic and
7. progressive (The Neame seven points of a mental illness).

I have campaigned for all my working life against the run down of mental hospitals and mental health care and written 3 books on the subject. The last book Suicide, Murder, and Violence, Assessment and

Prevention will probably never get published for I do not wish to publish it myself.....too much extra effort and work and at 62 I have retired early after 41 years as a Psychiatric nurse. I wrote the last book specifically to address the problem where an individual and their family and friends try to get help and are told that there “is no evidence of mental illness” a statement that is almost always wrong and which leads to suicide murder and violence.

People do not seek mental health help unless they have tried everything and are seriously concerned a fundamental truth that is totally ignored in modern mental health care.

My clinical experience and knowledge goes with me and unfortunately “modern training” is seriously lacking in clinical reality.

Modern Mental Health Care has returned us to the time of Dorothea Dix who from 1841 Campaigned for forty years to get the mentally ill out of prisons and into specialised hospitals for the mentally ill.

World News

Consequences of Non-Treatment



USA - The National Institute of Mental Illness (NIMH) in 2010 estimated that 7.7 million Americans suffer from schizophrenia and severe bipolar disorder - approximately 3.3% of the US population when combined.

<http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org>

Of these, approximately 40% of the individuals with schizophrenia and 51% of those with bipolar are untreated in any given year.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF NON-TREATMENT ARE DEVASTATING:

Homelessness

People with untreated psychiatric illnesses comprise one-third, or 200,000 people, of the estimated 600,000 homeless population. The quality of life for these individuals is abysmal. Many are victimized regularly. A recent study has found that 28 percent of homeless people with previous psychiatric hospitalizations obtained some food from garbage cans and 8 percent used garbage cans as a primary food source.

Incarceration

People with untreated serious brain disorders comprise approximately 16 percent of the total jail and prison inmate population, or nearly 300,000 individuals. These individuals are often incarcerated with misdemeanor charges but sometimes with felony charges as a result of behaviors caused by their psychotic thinking. People with untreated psychiatric illnesses spend twice as much time in jail as non-ill individuals and are more likely to commit suicide.

Episodes of Violence

There are approximately 1,600 homicides – among the estimated 16,000 total homicides in the U.S. – committed each year by people with untreated schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. According to a 1994 Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, “Murder in Families,” 4.3 percent of homicides committed in 1988 were by people with a

history of untreated mental illness (study based on 20,860 murders nationwide). The Department of Justice report also found:

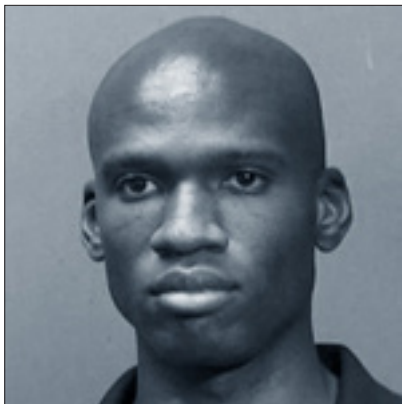
- of spouses killed by spouse – 12.3 percent of defendants had a history of untreated mental illness;
- of children killed by parent – 15.8 percent of defendants had a history of untreated mental illness;
- of parents killed by children – 25.1 percent of defendants had a history of untreated mental illness; and
- of siblings killed by sibling – 17.3 percent of defendants had a history of untreated mental illness.

Our *Consequences of Non-Treatment background paper* (link below) also provides information about victimization, suicide, clinical prognosis, fiscal impacts and incarceration.

<http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/resources/consequences-of-lack-of-treatment/violence/1384>

World News

Mental illness and violence in Seattle and D.C.



Focus on mental health - Recent headlines regarding Aaron Alexis and Donnell D. Jackson have the same conclusions.

http://seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2021845140_apusnavyyardshooting.html?syndication=rss

http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2021833233_stabbingfollowxml.html

The two men both had serious mental-health problems and, evidently, they were not getting the help needed for those problems.

Lawmakers and others focus on gun control, which may be needed. But no focus is given to the problems that beset many people, including these two.

I suggest that law changes need to put as much focus on helping people with mental illness as there is on gun control.

Further, it was not a gun but a knife that was used in the Seattle

Edith Keenan, Lake Stevens
The Seattle Times

Photo caption: According to a police report, Aaron Alexis was hearing voices. [Fort Worth Police Department via Getty Images]

<http://blogs.seattletimes.com/northwestvoices/2013/09/20/mental-illness-and-violence-in-seattle-and-d-c/>

Call for survivors

This may interest you.

My name is Gabriella, a photography student from RMIT University. These days I had a simple thought of suicide simply because I feel the world is not worth living. The urge is not so big that I tried to kill myself, but somehow I am changed since I have this thought. From this, I have an idea to make a documentary portrait of people who had survived suicide attempts and write their story along with it. With this I hope I can understand myself and the suicide topic better.

So anyone in Melbourne who interested in making this happen, or know somebody who does, please contact me through this email:

gabriella_anita@yahoo.com

The photograph will be published along with the story either in my personal website or a special website if the number of participant is a lot. The volunteers could have the photograph too if they wish to.

The photo shoot and interview will only take about an hour and refreshments will be provided! I hope this can be a great opportunity to share your story to others and have fun while doing it.

Here is my personal photography website to know me better:

www.gabriella-rawphotography.weebly.com

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.

Regards
Gabriella

Suicide, sad but true



This is my personal story. I am 60 years old and my baby sister was 53. She died last month when she hung herself on an oak tree outside the back door of her home.

She lived next door to my parents' home and my oldest sister lived on the other side. My brother and I lived on our farms about 10 miles away. My brother died in a plane crash five years ago.

I blame my baby sister's death on doctors who prescribed her pain medicine for several years after she had neck surgery.

She was given 40mg of morphine three times a day and Zanax for the two years. Last year her doctors took her totally off pain medicine. They should have known you cannot suddenly take a person off these medicines without the patient having serious, even fatal, side-effects.

To help you understand my story I will give you some information on how we were raised.

I consider my mother and father are perfect parents. My mother is a housewife, my father a retired Baptist minister. They are 86-years-old and still enjoy living on their farm.

They are both more important to me than they will ever know. I cherish each and every day I hear their voices.

When we were children they made sure we had everything we wanted. When we ate our meals we would all sit together and say grace over our blessings. We were truly blessed with a complete family. I had an older brother and two sisters.

We all graduated from our local high school, all got married and raised our families' close by. There had never been any drugs, other than prescription medicine from our doctors.

Back in the early 80s I was assaulted by a retired man who was employed by my husband and I doing odd jobs around the home.

One morning, after my husband had left for work, the man turned up at our front door wanting to do his odd jobs.

As I stepped outside the door I noticed he was drunk and asked him to come back later when my husband was home.

He pushed me aside and brushed past me saying he wanted to make a phone call. I told him to get out, but he grabbed the phone, knocked me down and used his knee to press my head on the floor and began ripping my clothes off.

I felt the phone next to me on the floor and pressed what I believed was the 0 button for the operator and screamed my name and address repeatedly until the police came just in time to keep me from being raped.

That was when my nightmares began. I needed help to understand why this horrible experienced happened to me. My husband took me to a doctor and he prescribed Prozac and 5mg of Valium.

This was the beginning of my life changing. I would spend the next three decades in a totally different frame of mind, with the drugs giving me suicidal thoughts.

After my first suicide attempt in the 1980s, when I overdosed by taking all my sleeping pills at once, I was admitted to a psychiatric ward.

After staying there for a couple of weeks the doctors changed my medicine to even stronger depression medicine.

Ten years passed and I could not remember why I got into such a deep depression and was having suicidal thoughts.

I had no reason to be depressed, had a perfect husband and all the things a wife could ever dream of.

I did not want to be around anyone, slept most of the day and nights and had no interest in or cared about anything or anyone. I could not remember important facts of my life.

In the 1990s I attempted suicide once again by refusing to eat. After spending a couple of weeks in hospital my medicine was changed and I became numb.

I drove to a train track and pulled up on the track, waiting for the train to come by and kill me. The train stopped due to a phone call from a concerned citizen.

My husband took me back to the hospital and the doctors wanted to double my dosage, but I refused to take the prescription from him.

They made me go back to what they called the behaviour modification ward, where they gave me a handful of drugs round the clock for two more weeks.

The doctors in the mental health wards did not diagnose my condition correctly. The classes I was made to participate in were for patients there due to sexual abuse and addictions I did not have.

I told them, but they did nothing. Some nurses were nice, while others refused to give me the time of day.

When they released me, my husband and I stopped at our local drug store on our way home.

I waited in the car and he returned with a bag of medicines, which cost him \$980. I told him there was no way I was taking the medication.

I found a woman doctor in a little town next to us who does not believe in prescribing narcotics.

My husband and I had a three-hour talk with her and discussed not taking any more prescribed medication. With her help I have not had any more medication.

As I said earlier, I know my troubles began when I was assaulted in the early 1980s. I can now feel the love of my parents and husband and have a lot of emotions flowing out. I can feel anger, sadness and happiness.. It is okay to cry – it is part of life. I feel a strong love for my family and friends.

My baby sister and I were very close over the past year since I got off the medications.

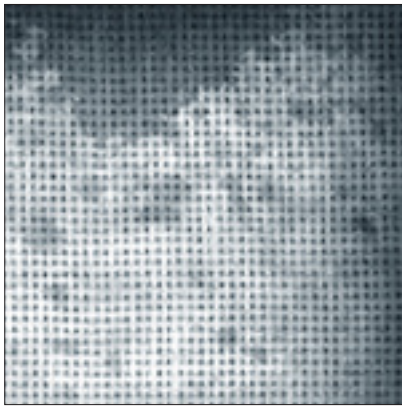
We made some great memories together. Only three days before she died she seemed happy as we rode our horses and went fishing. We shared our life and dreams together and planned a summer of having fun.

We talked about being Christians by faith and how we knew one day we would be with Jesus. I am grieving for my sister and brother.

I just do not understand how doctors can get away with what they have done to my sister and me.

I have not only lost my sister, I have lost 30 years of my life.

I am so angry



My partner and I had been together over 25 years. He was 61 at time of death. On the evening of his death we had a huge fight as I just found out he was having an affair with another women.

He desperately asked me to forgive him but I was so angry I just did not want to listen to what he had to say.

Shortly after we went to bed he got up, took something out of his side chest of tables and went into the computer room. I waited a little as I calmed down by then and went to see what he was doing. The door of the computer room was slightly opened and I pushed it fully open. He was sitting on a chair with a shot gun between his legs with string attached from his toe to the trigger of the shotgun. Before I could say anything he pulled the trigger with his toe and shot himself in the head. His whole head and blood was splattered all over me and the room from top to bottom.

I screamed and screamed and screamed running outside screaming for help. Nobody heard me. I had to ring the Police but my partner pulled the phone line out of the wall. I grabbed my mobile phone to call them and they came almost immediately.

What I saw has absolutely traumatised me and I have terrible nightmares. The worst was I had to pay specialised cleaners to come and clean all the mess and to make it cheaper for myself I assisted them with the clean up. I had no choice financially.

I do blame myself which I know I shouldn't but I keep thinking IF ONLY we did not have that huge fight he would still be alive. My thoughts and emotions are running rampant of what I could have done, what I should have done, what I should have said and tormenting myself with the why's and the if's.

I am angry that nobody wants to help me. I am angry that nobody seems to care. I am angry at him for doing what he did. I am angry that I can't talk about what happened. I am so angry it seems to be consuming me. At least the White Wreath Association –Action Against Suicide has listened to my concerns and totally understands what I am going through. I have sent the

White Wreath Association a photo of my partner and through them my partner will always be remembered on White Wreath Day-In Remembrance of All Victims of Suicide

DW

Footnote: We checked out this person's story regarding paying of cleanup and to our amazement the person did assist so cost of cleanup would be cheaper. We also discovered that the Government will compensate a family member up to \$3,000 for cleanup if it is a murder/homicide and the tragedy happened in a home environment. However not so for a family member like the person in question who was also an innocent bystander and witnessed in front of them the most horrific suicide imaginable. The above is only a condensed version as the letter was much more detailed and explicit.

How often have we explained the difference in understanding and compassion towards Mental Illness/ Suicide compared to any other Death/Illness. This is a prime example that comes directly from Government. We did contact the Attorney-General & Minister for Justice Department to "Please Explain" and as usual the cold attitude that they can't do anything is frightfully sickening. We have stated many times that collectively Government Politicians/Advisers can do and change anything they want to. I Fanita Clark as Head of our Organisation receive horrific stories on a daily basis via phone, letters, emails, etc. but this is the worst I have ever come across that a person/human being be treated in this manner. In the meantime this person is so traumatised but has to suffer alone, in silence and cope the best way they possibly can. If this is possible.

Hope



We are one of the fortunate and the unfortunate. Unfortunate, because we lost a dearly loved son through suicide at the age of 28; fortunate because we found the White Wreath Assoc. where members have all suffered loss through suicide and therefore are the only ones who truly appreciate the devastation that suicide wreaks.

Having read all the articles and letters sent to the newsletter and having an affinity with each and every one in some part I will not add my particular experience. Instead I want to offer HOPE. Yes, HOPE. You will laugh again. When we first went to an organisation in Perth, WA called Compassionate Friends, there were all these survivors of suicide – laughing. I was angry – how dared they laugh when we are suffering so badly, don't they know. But of course they did know because they had all been through the despair we were suffering on that day.

I can't tell you when you will join the world again. It took me years – too many years and I am sure this withdrawing from the world took its toll on other members of my family as well. But, as you would know, I just couldn't help it. I was one of the lucky ones with a husband who tried his utmost during the period of my depression. The chances are we are also dealing with other issues prior to the suicide of our loved one, difficult family members, work worries, 'time of life', financial problems. It is like a volcano and the suicide sets all the other 'rubbish' off into a catalyst explosion. We are then faced with dealing with everything at once – no wonder it takes time to recover.

But as I said there is HOPE. Time will not necessarily take away your pain. After 12 years we just yearn to have our son back with us. Of course, this is not going to happen. What follows is 'Acceptance'. We have to accept that Mark is not coming back. We remember his laugh, he loved company, he was an extrovert, and he would talk to us about anything and everything he was doing. He was married to a lovely girl who embraced us as her family. You ask, Why, and the answer is we don't know. We just get a phone call at 4.00 am to tell us our son has died, hit by a train – the rest as they say is history.

We have joined the world again; we laugh again and have fun, go on holidays and outings, meet friends. Sometimes on outings we will say "Mark would like this" or "Do you remember when Mark did that". We don't exclude him; he was part of us for 28 years and will never be forgotten. That is often a fear. That our loved son/daughter will be forgotten – they won't be. Don't give up HOPE that one-day you will feel better than you do right now.

MW, Brisbane Qld

A friend 4 me - my story



Kelly's Journal continued.

27th March 2010 – My Second Attempt

David had just gotten home from working away and now had the 3 kids back in his care. He had no idea what I had done.

This morning I read on his Facebook that he is in a relationship but it had no name. I can't believe it. My family and my husband, I have lost them all to another woman. I have nothing. The one person who was always there for me and I had thrown them away.

Today was the day. I got more alcohol. I still had my car hose. I drove my car into the bush. I text Jo this time. I still don't want her to blame herself for my death. I tell her myself that it was not her fault. I then text David it says will you still love me when I'm gone. And look after my kids for me.

Then I made the mistake of driving through a small puddle which ended up being a very big puddle. I got the car bogged. I got out the car. It was still running so I set the car up. I could still do this. I decided not to drink the alcohol. I needed to think straight. The water line was just under the muffler and the hose keeps floating out. I try for about an hour but it is no good.

The hose won't stay in the muffler. I phone the only person I knew who could find me. I phone David. He was the only person I could explain where I was and could find me. David had just spoken to my mother who had told him about my last attempt.

David phoned the police and told them where I was. It was the police who found me again that day.

David turns up with Dylan in his car. They both watch me getting taken away by ambulance and x3 police cars. Dylan's attitude towards me changes this day. He loves me again. Off to hospital where I spend 3hrs on oxygen and the weekend locked up in mental health.

To be continued.

Correspondence



We appreciate you letting us know your thoughts and stories. We are always touched and delighted by the letters, postcards and emails we receive from our readers. Here are some we received this month.

I wish I had heard of this organisation before the 11th July 2013 - the day my beautiful brother died.

* * * * *

Hello,
I would like to help support your cause and would like to learn more and become a volunteer. I live in the Northern Gold Coast.
Regards

Board of Directors

I am very pleased to announce the following elected Board Members and together we will serve you to the best of our ability.

Fanita Clark
Craig Gillespie
Mark Knipe
Ruth Avenell
Karen Smyth
Tina Knipe &
Peter Clark.

Peter Neame remains as White Wreath Assoc Research Officer and will retain this position including his regular Newsletter Articles.

You can help

You can do your part to help White Wreath Association.

YOU CAN BE A VOLUNTEER

We need volunteers from any part of Australia.

YOU CAN GIVE IN KIND

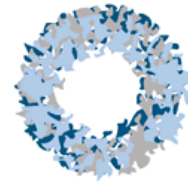
- Petrol Gift Cards
- Stamps

OR DONATE BY SELECTING ANY OF THESE OPTIONS

1. Via credit card then follow the instructions.
2. Directly/Direct Transfer into any Westpac Bank
Account Name:
White Wreath Association Ltd
BSB No 034-109 Account No 210509
3. Cheque/Money Order to:
White Wreath Association Ltd
PO Box 1078 Browns Plains QLD 4118

Donations are tax deductible.

Coming Events



- White Wreath Day -
In Remembrance
of all Victims of Suicide
Thursday, 29 May 2014

QUEENSLAND (MAIN SERVICE)

OFFICIAL CEREMONY 12:30-1:30 PM
DISPLAY ON VIEW ALL DAY
POST OFFICE SQUARE (CBD)
270 QUEEN STREET
BRISBANE QUEENSLAND
Email: white.wreath@bigpond.com
Phone: 1300 766 177
Mobile: 0410 526 562

VICTORIA

CIVIC GREEN (CBD)
WARRNAMBOOL VICTORIA
Contact Lyn
Email: stepmum108@gmail.com
Mobile: 0417 169 073

Humour

A small boy is sent to bed by his father. Five minutes later...

“Da-ad...”

“What?”

“I’m thirsty. Can you bring drink of water?”

“No. You had your chance. Lights out.”

Five minutes later: “Daaaaad...”

“WHAT?”

“I’m THIRSTY. Can I have a drink of water?”

“I told you NO! If you ask again, I’ll have to spank you!”

Five minutes later... “Daaaa-aaaad...”

“WHAT!”

“When you come in to spank me, can you bring a drink of water?”

Humour



A man in a hot air balloon realized he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a woman tending to the flowers in her

garden. He descended a bit more and shouted, 'Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend that I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am.'

The woman below replied, 'You're in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You're between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and between 59 and 60 degrees west longitude.'

'You must be an Accountant,' said the balloonist.

'I am,' replied the woman, 'How did you know?'

'Well,' answered the balloonist, 'everything you told me is technically correct, but I have no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is, I'm still lost. Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you have delayed my journey.'

The woman below responded, 'You must be in Management.'

'I am,' replied the balloonist, 'but how did you know?'

'Well,' said the woman, 'you don't know where you are, or where you're going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise of which you have no idea how to keep, and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but somehow it's now become my fault!'

May the peace and blessings of Christmas be yours



And may the coming year be filled with happiness.