Dear Friends,

While taking a break from writing this message, I couldn’t help but glance out the window and take in the changes happening in the world right outside. The seasons were changing from winter to spring almost right before my eyes. Flowers were beginning to bloom, the grass was becoming greener, and the sun was shining brighter in a sky that seemed to me to be a bit bluer. I felt a sense of hope and happiness as I realized that the cold, snowy weather was in the “rear view mirror” (at least for a few months!) and that warm, sunny days were ahead.

Many of us experience this sense of hope and “rebirth” when spring arrives. However, for individuals struggling with mental health issues, spring can be a very difficult time. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide rates spike in the spring—not around the holidays as everyone suspects.

But why the increase during spring? There are many theories. According to a study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* as hours of sunlight increase, so does the risk of suicide. The authors of the study speculate that sunlight could boost energy and motivation, thus giving people who are depressed the ability to take action and make a suicide attempt.

Another possible culprit for feeling low during spring may be *seasonal affective disorder*. Although it’s usually associated with winter, sometimes warmer temperatures and brighter days aren’t enough to lift the blues. In addition, seeing cheery people all around you can be a constant reminder that others are having a good time when you aren’t. People who are struggling may feel left out of the increase in social engagements — essentially, they feel that the isolation of winter has withdrawn for everyone except for them.

Regardless of the reason, this increase in suicide during spring is real. Don’t be lulled into thinking a brighter season necessarily means a brighter mood for someone who is struggling with mental health issues. Instead, use this knowledge to be more vigilant about suicidal thinking and behavior. If you’re worried, ask the person you’re worried about. Reach out, ask questions, offer assistance. You won’t regret it and you just might save a life.

Sincerely,

Stephanie G. Kelly
Executive Director
Suicide Warning Signs

Talking about suicide – Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm, such as "I wish I hadn't been born," "If I see you again..." and "I'd be better off dead."

Seeking out lethal means – Seeking access to guns, pills, knives, or other objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.

Preoccupation with death – Unusual focus on death, dying, or violence. Writing poems or stories about death.

No hope for the future – Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped ("There's no way out"). Belief that things will never get better or change.

Self-loathing, self-hatred – Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Feeling like a burden ("Everyone would be better off without me").

Getting affairs in order – Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.

Saying goodbye – Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again.

Withdrawing from others – Withdrawing from friends and family. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.

Self-destructive behavior – Increased alcohol or drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sex. Taking unnecessary risks as if they have a "death wish."

Sudden sense of calm – A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to attempt suicide.

Speaking up if You’re Worried

Earlier in this newsletter, you were encouraged to reach out, ask questions, offer help if you are worried about someone or if you spot the signs of suicide in someone you care about. You might wonder if it’s a good idea to say anything – thinking “What if I’m wrong?” or “What if the person gets angry?”

It's natural to feel uncomfortable or afraid and talking to a friend or family member about their suicidal thoughts or feelings can be extremely difficult. But if you're unsure whether someone is suicidal, the best way to find out is to ask. You can't make a person suicidal by showing that you care. In fact, giving a suicidal person the opportunity to express his or her feelings can provide relief from loneliness and pent-up negative feelings, and may prevent a suicide attempt.

Ways to start a conversation about suicide:
"I have been feeling concerned about you lately."

"Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing."

"I wanted to check in with you because you haven’t seemed yourself lately."

Questions you can ask:
"When did you begin feeling like this?"

"Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?"

"How can I best support you right now?"

"Have you thought about getting help?"

What you can say that helps:
"You are not alone in this. I'm here for you."

"You may not believe it now, but the way you’re feeling will change."

"I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."

"When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold off for just one more day, hour, minute—whatever you can manage."
The Power of Collaboration

During the months of March and April, Samaritans on Cape Cod and the Islands joined forces with Sharing Kindness and the Cape & Islands Suicide Prevention Coalition to bring three powerful suicide awareness events to our community.

Suicide: The Ripple Effect

On March 16, our organizations worked together to host a screening of the film Suicide: The Ripple Effect for 96 attendees. The film, a feature length documentary, focuses on the devastating effects of suicide and the tremendous positive ripple effects of advocacy, inspiration and hope that are helping millions heal & stay alive.

The film highlights the story of Kevin Hines, who at age 19, attempted to take his life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge. Today Kevin is a world-renowned mental health advocate, motivational speaker and author who travels the globe spreading his message of hope, recovery and wellness.

Some of you may remember when Samaritans hosted a presentation by Kevin Hines in honor of our 35th anniversary in 2012.

In 2012, Kevin Hines experiences the Samaritans art installation In Their Shoes which symbolically represented those who have died by suicide on the Cape and Islands between 2000 and 2009.

Smash the Stigma!

Our collaborative efforts continued on April 27th at the Smash the Stigma! event at Hog Island Beer Company in Orleans to kick-off the 1st Annual Cape and Islands Suicide Awareness Walk. With live music, raffles, food and drink, this event provided guests of all ages an opportunity to join in the fun and support the upcoming walk.

1st Annual Cape & Islands Suicide Awareness Walk

On April 28th, we were again able to work as a team member with Sharing Kindness and the Cape & Islands Suicide Prevention Coalition to spread awareness and raise funds for suicide prevention on Cape Cod and the Islands.

Over 300 individuals from all over the Cape and Islands joined together to walk to end the silence around suicide.
1st Annual Sandwich Bocce Bash a Smashing Success!

The 1st Annual Sandwich Bocce Bash was a day of fun, fellowship, and friendly competition. The event provided an opportunity to raise funds to support the important senior outreach and support services offered by our organization and the Friends of the Sandwich Council on Aging. It was a great day for two great organizations helping Sandwich seniors!

While Mother Nature didn’t cooperate with the weather, it didn’t dampen our spirits and we’re already looking forward to next year!

Congratulations to the 1st Annual Sandwich Bocce Bash Winners
Cat Wiklund, Chris Wiklund, Jim Steeves, and Jeremy Shea

Thank you to the members of the 2018 Bocce Bash Organizing Committee
Jack Vaccaro
Regina Peters
Karen Ellery-Jones
Mary Ellen Steeves
Jeremy Shea
Denise Dever
Paula Johnson
Marian McLoughlin
John Peters

Thank you to Camp Lyndon for hosting this event

1st Annual Sandwich Bocce Bash Sponsors

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Café Chew
Fishermen’s View Restaurant
Nonna Elena Italian Specialty Foods
Pat Ryan
Rick Anderson
Sandwich Council on Aging

Special Thanks to Bob King of Café Chew and Chef Carlo Perugia for gathering ingredients, preparing, and serving a truly wonderful authentic Italian meal at our event!

It’s Not Too Late to Play Bocce!

The 11th Annual Samaritans Upper Cape Bocce Festival is Coming in September!

Visit our website at www.CapeSamaritans.org for date and registration information!
Samaritans on Cape Cod and the Islands
Support Programs 101

While many of you are familiar with our organization and the supports that we provide, we are often still only identified for operating our crisis lines. While this program is the foundation of our organization and provides support by answering an average of 20,000 incoming calls per year, we offer so much more for those who are struggling or who have been touched by suicide. For those who are new to our organization or for those who want to know more, information about our programs is listed below.

**Senior Outreach** -- Created in 2009 in response to the growing need of seniors in our community, Senior Outreach is a referral program where outgoing calls are made to isolated, or at-risk older adults. Participants are matched with a Samaritan-trained volunteer who calls the senior once or twice each week. Conversations are confidential, and provide a safe place for older adults to talk about whatever is troubling them most without fear of judgment or repercuession.

**Safe Place Suicide Loss Survivor Support Groups** -- Losing a loved one to suicide is a painful and difficult experience that can leave survivors feeling isolated. Safe Place provides those who have lost someone to suicide a caring, confidential support group where they do not have to be alone with their grief. Groups are free of charge and confidential. Meetings are facilitated by Samaritan-trained volunteers, many of whom are survivors themselves.

**Care Package Program** -- Talking with other loss survivors with shared experience can be therapeutic; but not everyone is interested in attending a support group. The Care Package program was created to address this need and to help loss survivors receive support during their most private moments. Each Care Package contains books, brochures, articles, and online resources that other loss survivors have found helpful as they grieve. Care Packages are available free of charge, and can be mailed anywhere in the United States.

**A Second Chance Suicide Attempt Survivors Groups** -- The time after a suicide attempt can be very confusing and filled with conflicting emotions. Many attempt survivors feel ashamed or guilty or even angry that they are still alive. Because of the stigma associated with suicide, attempt survivors often find it difficult to reach out. They feel isolated and alone and don’t know where to turn. Talking with others who have similar experiences can be an important part of healing after a suicide attempt. A Second Chance offers a safe, non-judgmental place for people to talk about the feelings that led them to attempt suicide, to talk about the impact their attempt had on their lives, and to build resiliency by identifying resources and coping strategies for the future. Groups are confidential and free-of-charge.

**A Second Chance Families Groups for Family Members of Suicide Attempt Survivors** -- One of two new programs launched in 2018, this group was designed in response to a direct request from attempt survivors who had participated in our A Second Chance groups. This 6-weeks program is designed to provide peer support as well as to develop self-care and coping skills after a loved one’s suicide attempt. As with A Second Chance, this group offers a safe, non-judgmental place for participants to talk with others who have similar lived experiences. Groups are confidential and free-of-charge.

**A Caring Connection** -- The second new program to be implemented in 2018 is A Caring Connection. This unique program is the first of its kind on Cape Cod and the Islands and is designed to provide engagement and follow up for individuals who are being discharged from an emergency room or hospital setting after a suicide attempt. Samaritan volunteers provide encouragement and coaching on a one-to-one basis to facilitate the participant’s follow through on community after care and therapy. This is an exciting new opportunity that allows Samaritans to collaborate for the first time in a formal way with the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health.
Grant Awards

The Samaritans on Cape Cod and the Islands would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the following state, private, and charitable foundations for their generous support:

- C. Northrop Pond and Alethea Marder Pond Foundation
- Cape and Islands Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Cape Cod Health Care
- Elder Services on Cape Cod & the Islands
- Falmouth Road Race, Inc.
- Marine Lodge, A.F. & A.M.
- The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health
- The Massachusetts Suicide Prevention Program of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- The Woods Hole Foundation

Special Recognition

To our Gold Sponsor,
The Enterprise Newspapers

Thank You

To all of our individual and private donors.
Your generosity keeps us going!

Heartfelt Gratitude

To our volunteers for your time and your compassion!
We could never do what we do without you!

Monica Dickens Stratton
1915-1992
Founder
Samaritans on Cape Cod and the Islands

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