
Suicide and Violence Prevention Newsletters

2019

2019 January Newsletter

Nova Southeastern University

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OFFICE OF SUICIDE & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Quarterly Newsletter

School Violence and Suicide

In this issue:	Page
Update on Legislative Changes in Broward County.....	1
LGBTQ School Violence Prevention.....	2
Suicide Prevention Month at a glance.....	4
Suicide Prevention Training	5
School Violence Interview.....	7
Interview with Lori Alhadeff.....	13

IMPORTANT DAY FOR SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE

Survivor Day is the one day a year when people affected by suicide loss gather around the world at events in their local communities to find comfort and gain understanding as they share stories of healing and hope. On Saturday, November 17, 2018, loss survivors gathered around the globe in small and large events and grew together in their grief journey. Each event was unique and offered various programming, however each event site featured an American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) produced documentary that offers a message of growth, resilience, and connection. - <https://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone/survivor-day/>

UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE CHANGES IN BROWARD COUNTY

Samuel Soria, Jr.

On February 14, 2018, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School suffered a mass murder shooting massacre (McCarthy, 2018). Significant reformations surrounding the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting were declared on February 23, 2018, by Governor Rick Scott. The two following bills were passed: The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (SB – 7026) and the Public Records Meetings/School Safety Act (SB – 1940). The overbearing goal of the new legislation laws were to make public schools safer while restricting access to lethal means to mentally ill and deranged persons. Key characteristics are listed below:

- Gun control restrictions have strengthened in order to prevent dangerous individuals gaining access to lethal firearms.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS:

In January, NSU's College of Student Affairs Association will host Dr. Stefany Marcus's Suicide and Violence Prevention Presentation.

In February, NSU's College of Health Care Sciences Student Affairs will host Dr. Stefany Marcus's Stress Management Presentation.

In February, Dr. Scott Poland will be the keynote speaker on school violence for the Pennsylvania School Administrators Association.

At the National Association of School Psychologists Convention in February, Dr. Scott Poland will provide two invited workshops: Suicide Prevention and Suicide Postvention.

In March, Dr. Scott Poland will provide the keynote on suicide prevention at the Oregon State Suicide Prevention Conference.

- Financial resources were allocated to support Mental Health initiatives and enhancing school safety.

Below, the following provisions were made by Governor Rick Scott (Florida Government, 2018):

- The addition of "Risk Protection Orders" prevents violent or mentally ill individuals from purchasing or owning a firearm.
- Law enforcement is able to petition a court file to have an individual surrender their firearm if suspected to be dangerous
- Law enforcement officers are able to seize firearms from those detained under the "Baker Act".
- Individuals in the general population must be at least 21-years-old to purchase any firearm in addition to a newly formed three-day waiting period.
- Violent threats to schools will now have a higher penalty for those making them.
- Bump stocks, a machine gun modification, is now banned of sale and possession

Efforts in Enhancing School Safety and Mental Health Initiatives have been implemented since.

Key characteristics are listed below:

- Each school in the state of Florida now requires a safe-school officer whom are sworn-in law enforcement officers
- Some teachers will be allowed to carry firearms after a comprehensive 132-hour training.
- Mandatory active shooter trainings in schools are required every semester; District employees and first responders are associated with the school system are required to participate.
- School buildings will now have specific school safety needs, such as bulletproof glass, steel doors, upgraded locks, and metal detectors.
- Communication for purposes of sharing information is made easier between state officials and communities.
- Additionally, every student in Florida will have access to a mental health counselor.
- Every school in Florida is required to have monthly reviews of potential threats to students and staff.

Ultimately, more changes are likely to happen. Most recently in October, media organizations and community members began filing law suits in order to obtain state records surrounding government official's involvement in the shooting. Additionally, the community has started searching for documented evidence surrounding disciplinary actions against the deranged former student and official's responses to them. Nevertheless, the efforts of all state, federal, government, and community members are, in spite of the tragedy, favorable to reformation.

References

McCarthy, J. (2018). Florida school shooting: Worst school shooting in the U.S. history. Florida Today

Resources

Florida Senate. (2018). CS/SB 7026: Public safety. Retrieved from: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/20>

Florida Senate. (2018). SB 1940: Public records and public meetings/School safety. Retrieved from: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/1940>

LGBTQ SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Breanne Stewart

In October, Nova Southeastern University School Psychology students and professors packed their bags for a week in Orlando to attend the Florida Association of School Psychology (FASP) conference. Various presentations included topics such as Social Emotional Learning, gun violence from the perspective of Parkland student survivor Aly Sheehy,

and suicide prevention. However, in a small, tucked away 30-seat conference room that became standing room only, was a presentation that discussed a pressing issue that affects all students, faculty, and staff within a school. This is an issue that has gained more attention in the last few years but has always been, and will always be present. When

parents think about their children participating in compulsory education, they often wonder the quality of the education, the extra-curricular programs that the school offers, or perhaps tutoring services or special education supports that are present. They are not concerned about the school staff knowing how to protect a student who does not identify like the majority of their peers. They do focus on creating policies within the school to keep their children who identify as part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) spectrum safe. For some students, these and other protective factors may be the difference between life or death, especially if the student's family does not accept them.

NSU's third year school psychology doctoral student Juliette Hubbard, third year school specialist student Breanne Taylor, and professor in the psychology doctoral programs Dr. Peter Caproni spoke specifically in their presentation entitled *Promoting Family Acceptance for LGBT Adolescence* about the struggles that ensue within families and schools that involve an LGBT child or adolescent. Juliette began the presentation by addressing the challenges these students face at home and school. She focused on the high rates of family rejection that result in homelessness, depression, and suicide. Juliette expressed that depression rates that are 5.9% higher than the national average is due to a family's rejection of sexual orientation. Additionally, students that identify as gay or lesbian are statistically **eight times** more likely to attempt suicide than students who do not identify as gay or lesbian.

Following Juliette, Breanne discussed the current climate of transgender students within schools and families. Similar to gay and lesbian students, transgender students are also subjected to higher rates of suicide, depression, and bullying. Suicide attempt rates amongst these students are at a staggering **41%**, as compared to 3% of the U.S. population. Transgender students are more likely to experience both psychological distress and physical abuse by family members the earlier they reveal their departure from traditional gender binaries of male or female. This includes dressing either androgynous or in clothing that is typically associated with the student's opposite gender.

Breanne went on to hypothesize that the family abuse of an LGBT child may be rooted in fear. When parents do not understand or they rely on what they

QUICK RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON LGBTQ EDUCATION AND POLICIES

The Yes Institute: <http://www.yesinstitute.org/>

The Yes Institute specializes in educating others on topics of gender and orientation. They have been instrumental in helping Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Broward, and Hillsboro counties create their transgender inclusive school policies.

Equality Florida: <http://www.eqfl.org/>

Equality Florida typically works with school boards and superintendents to educate them on federal, state, and local laws. Equality Florida consults on what schools can legally do versus what is against the law while helping them to develop policies.

Safe Schools: <http://www.fldoe.org/safe-schools>

Safe Schools, in partnership with the Florida Department of Education works on creating policies and programs to help all students in schools. Safe Schools Florida has a large mental health section and a small section that mentions best practices for LGBT students.

National Association of School Psychologists:

<http://www.nasp.org/>

The National Association of School Psychologists has a large database with papers relating to research and best practices when working with gay and lesbian or transgender students and their families.

GLSEN: <http://www.glsen.org/>

One of the most comprehensive research organizations relating to LGBT students in American schools. GLSEN conducts a school climate survey every two years that examines the obstacles LGBT students face. Their comprehensive analysis breaks apart L,G,B,T versus the heterosexual population to show the need for education and policies relating to LGBT students

have seen in the media, they become scared that their child will not grow up to be 'normal' or accepted. Their parents read about negative consequences that happen to individuals who identify as LGBT and do not want that to happen to their child. In some instances, parents try to 'beat' the "gay" or "transgender" out of their child in hopes that if they can make their children heterosexual or identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth that everything will be okay.

So how can we help the parents of students who identify as either lesbian, gay, or transgender? Through education and support. It is new and scary for parents who have a child who identifies as part of the LGBT spectrum. Some do not know the first thing to do, what to think, or how to help. They have a lot of questions. For some, this may go against their religious beliefs, for others, this may go against their culture. It is important for parents to seek resources, to help them understand their questions, and therapy, to help them make sense of what they are feeling. This is where a school psychologist can play a huge role. If there is a student that comes to you about not feeling safe at home, wanting to tell their parents about identifying as part of the LGBT spectrum, or that their parents kicked them out of their home and onto the streets, it is vital to provide as much support for both the student and the parents as possible. When meeting with the parents, Breanne and Dr. Caproni offer a few suggestions.

Dr. Caproni stressed client-centered care. It is important to know as much as possible about the student and family before going into the first session with them. He urged that the therapist know about the client's culture, religion, and beliefs. Only after getting a good idea about the family dynamics and their beliefs should a meeting be scheduled. Breanne pointed out that it may be necessary to discard 'typical' techniques learned in therapy. It is vital to meet the family where they are in order to allow space for them to discuss their feelings without feeling judged. Avoid key phrases such as "I understand" and replace with "I can't imagine how difficult this may be for you and your family." Let the family lead the session. As a therapist, it is important to remember that the parents' feelings are being fueled by fear. The parents may be caught between their cultural beliefs, what their culture tells them about the LGBT community, and how their child may personally affect them. Dr. Caproni reminds us that it is ultimately the parents' decisions in caring for their child, but remember that statistics show their child may have less than a 50% chance of survival.

Juliette, Breanne, and Dr. Caproni ended with discussing resources that are available locally and nationally. These resources are included below. Please contact any one of these resources if you or someone you know is working with an LGBT family or student and needs assistance.

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Resources

GSLEN school climate 2017 executive summary

[https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GSLEN 2017 National School Climate Survey %28NCS%29 - Executive Summary %28English%29.pdf](https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GSLEN%202017%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%28NCS%29%20-%20Executive%20Summary%28English%29.pdf)

SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH AT A GLANCE

Samantha Guy

The month of September was a busy month for the Office of Suicide and Violence Prevention (SVP). In an effort to promote National Suicide Prevention month Dr. Poland, Dr. Flemons, and the SVP team participated in numerous events throughout the community. Kicking off the month was the Suicide Awareness Week Event on September 7th in which the Family Medicine Club (SAACOF) and the Mental Health Awareness Taskforce (MHATF) hosted a candle lighting ceremony for suicide awareness. Following the ceremony several speakers addressed the audience on various topics focusing on suicide awareness. Student survivors of suicide spoke about their experiences of losing friends and family to suicide and their own mental health struggles. Dr. Poland, representing SVP, gave personal examples of his experience with losing a family member to suicide. He explained the importance of physicians assessing for suicidality and provided statistics about how many people who die by suicide seek out physicians before completing suicide. According to Ahmedani (2015), 64% of people who attempt suicide visit a doctor in the month before their attempt. Dr. Poland also demonstrated effective ways to assess for suicide. Additionally, Jackie Rosen of the Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention (FISP) gave a presentation on the numerous warning signs to suicide and how to better assess for it.

The following week, Dr. Poland interviewed with "On The Couch" Radio Talk Show in Baltimore, MD where he provided statistics on risks to suicide and ways to prevent it. On campus at Nova Southeastern University (NSU), the SVP office and NSU Students for Prevention, Intervention, and Response to Emergencies (NSPIRE) collaborated to set up a table in the NSU College of Psychology building where information on awareness and facts about suicide prevention was provided to students, faculty, and staff. On September 12th, NSPIRE hosted "Words of Wisdom Wednesday" in which they asked NSU College of Psychology students, faculty, and staff to write inspirational messages for local suicide survivor support groups. On September 14th, NSPIRE and SVP presented "Myth Busters Friday" in an effort to debunk myths about suicide through an interactive game discussing myths and facts about suicide.

The third week of September continued with Dr. Stefany Marcus's, SVP's post-doctoral resident, interview with NSU's Newspaper, The Current, in which she discussed the stigma of suicide and the need for an awareness of the importance of mental health at NSU. Later that week, Dr. Flemons presented a workshop on Relational Suicide Assessment. He discussed key points for therapists, psychologists, and mental health professionals to know about warning signs, risk assessment, and intervention (e.g., safety planning,

hospitalization, etc.). Dr. Flemons also gave a Suicide Prevention Presentation to NSU medical students on suicide myths and warning signs.

The last week of September held two large events that culminated the promotion of National Suicide Awareness month. On September 25th, Make Our Schools Safe (makeoursschoolssafe.org) hosted the Keeping Our Community Safe event at the Watercrest Clubhouse in Parkland, FL. This organization was started by the newly appointed school board member, Lori Alhadeff, who lost her daughter, Alyssa, in the Stonemen Douglas shooting last February. The event hosted a 2-1-1 presentation about their services and Dr. Poland spoke on behalf of SVP about suicide assessment to parents. On September 29th, NSPIRE and the Student Organization for the Advocacy of Psychology (SOAP) hosted an "Out of Darkness" back to school social. The social provided the opportunity for psychology students and friends to reunite, share their experiences, and celebrate the beginning of a new school year. This month-long event offered students, faculty, and staff alike the opportunity to share resources and stories on this highly stigmatized topic. By reaching out to those affected, raising awareness, connecting individuals to treatment services, and providing a wealth of information, NSU and their various organizations demonstrated a collective passion and strength towards the prevention and intervention of suicide.

Resources from Suicide Prevention Month

FISP:

<https://fisponline.org/survivors-infor/support-groups/>

Information about survivor support groups

Dr. Stefany Marcus's interview with the NSU Newspaper can be found at:

<https://nsucurrent.nova.edu/2018/09/25/treat-the-person-treat-the-stigma-suicide-and-mental-health-awareness-at-nsu/>

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SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

Samuel Soria, Jr. & Samantha Vance

Suicide prevention initiatives are becoming a greater concern amongst professional students for a valid reason. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2016), suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States (U.S.). Suicide is prevalent, does not discriminate, and is difficult to identify. Nevertheless, the Master's level graduate students in counseling with a clinical mental health counseling concentration, at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) are taking initiative in obtaining the proper trainings to make a positive impact in those suffering from suicidality. This training was led by Dr. Stefany Marcus, Psy. D., whom works in the NSU's Office of Suicide and Violence Prevention.

The workshop training began with an introduction to suicidality. Time was spent breaking down barriers to mental health stigma surrounding suicide. Namely, rephrasing "committing suicide" to "die by suicide". The benefit underlying this is suicide awareness, taking away the word "commit" as it is usually referred to committing a criminal act against someone else. Not only does this integrate community efforts to destigmatize suicide, but it also helps prevent isolation amongst those suffering. Facts were shared, including: suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death between 10 and 34-year-olds; suicide rates have increased in all states, except Nevada; Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska see the most deaths by suicide; and the leading method of suicide is the use of a firearm. These statistics may appear discouraging and alarming. So, how can one individual make a significant impact?

The identification of key variables in suicidality and dissemination of these variables are ways one individual can make a withstanding impact. The workshop training equipped students with the most prevalent contemporary theory of suicidology: The Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (2005). The Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (IPT) indicates individuals suffering from suicidality require two variables as precursors: the desire to die by suicide and the ability to use fatal means (Joiner, 2005). Two psychological mindsets are identified according to the IPT, they are thwarted belongingness and perceived

STUDENTS PRESENT ON SUICIDE TRAINING AND PREVENTION TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

At the recent Florida Association of School Psychologists (FASP) annual conference in Orlando, FL, NSU students Alexa Beck, Pamela Hirsh, Samantha Guy, and Frances Bigay along with faculty Dr. Gene Cash and Dr. Sarah Valley-Gray gave two presentations on suicide training and prevention. One presentation discussed a suicide training program based on 10 key competency areas in suicide assessment. The other presentation focused on the key components of a suicide assessment along with research from Nova's Standardized Patient Project at the College of Psychology.

burdensomeness (Joiner, 2005; Van Orden, Witte, Cukrowicz, Braithwaite, Selby & Joiner, 2011). **Thwarted belongingness** refers to an individual's inability to feel a sense of connection between themselves and others. **Perceived burdensomeness** refers to an individual's degraded sense of purpose. When these two psychological mindsets are compounded with the ability to enact lethality, individuals are at high risk for suicide.

Once students learned how to properly identify the variables presented by the IPT, students were taught specific techniques on how to thoroughly assess for suicide. One effective and promoted method is to directly ask the client, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" It was emphasized to the students that they should practice empathy while speaking to their potentially suicidal clients, for they are individuals who may be greatly suffering. They were also instructed on how to proceed with a potentially suicidal patient/client. Intervention strategies, such

as restricting means, safety-planning, and The Florida Baker Act were comprehensively discussed.

During the course of the presentation, students were encouraged to role-play. Their objective was to identify risk factors and ask direct questions related to suicide. For some, these questions were atypical and difficult to communicate during role-play. Nevertheless, students' reactions to the role-plays were profound and showed clinical competence growth in the subject, based on their statements. For students Lisa Hernandez and Christine Sadler, both felt uncomfortable about directly and openly asking whether their client had plans to kill themselves. Their initial reaction to their discomfort is because they did not want to offend their client. In addition, the future clinicians took culture in consideration and felt that suicide and mental health, in general, is taboo in specific cultures. This reinforces the point

of the workshop training to break down barriers and promote mental health awareness. Ultimately, the two students felt the workshop training was helpful for their future practica experience where they anticipate counseling individuals whom may be suffering from suicidality.

To conclude, the suicide prevention workshop training was a success. Students learned how to destigmatize suicidality and mental health. The facts have been presented regarding suicide, as well as the key variables that make assessments more effective. Students were encouraged to explore outside their comfort levels while achieving their objective in preventing suicide. The tools taught and implemented during the role-playing portion helped students gain clinical competence when encountering individuals suffering from suicidality. There is no doubt, the initiative these students exemplify will help save lives from suicide.

SCHOOL VIOLENCE INTERVIEW

With Scott Poland Ed.D. and Douglas Flemons Ph.D.

Douglas Flemons [DF]: Well as we are talking today, on the 20th of March there is another school shooting in Maryland. We are still reeling from the one in our backyard, in Parkland. You recently went to a meeting with high level folks in the Broward County school system to do some forward planning. Can you talk about what, how that meeting got scheduled and what your participation was?

Scott Poland [SP]: I certainly can, and this is Scott. I actually received a call from the director of student services in Broward, I was away at a conference, and the Broward Schools is actually a place where I have done a lot of training for school psychologists, counselors, and social workers about crisis intervention, and they were aware that I've helped a lot of other school systems after

"Schools almost always underestimate the impact of a school shooting."

tragic school shootings. So, the initial consultation focused on how important it is to get a team of people together and take steps to try to provide immediate supports to families and students that were really affected. But a couple days later there was a key administrative meeting held and I was one of the people invited, and there were a lot of top level Broward administrators there who were close to the superintendent.

The superintendent wasn't personally in the meeting, but we were really looking at what do we do now and how to move forward.

DF: What do we do know about how to move forward, not only for Stoneman Douglas, but for general?

SP: Yes, yes, because one of the points that I made was

the impact is really quite extensive when you have such a tragic situation but also one that was so highly publicized with the media. So, the focus was really twofold. Stoneman Douglas, a plan was made and it was interesting that those of us in attendance were asked to sign basically a confidentiality agreement not to say a word about what the plan was for Stoneman Douglas faculty and students because the plan was made but it had not been presented to them yet, so it'd been really inappropriate for us to go out and talk about when school would resume, what kind of services would be available. One thing that we suggested was that there be sort of an open house kind of event where parents and students could come back to the school together and be with each other and walk around.

DF: Before it was open.

SP: Yes. And then that there also be key support for faculty by themselves even

before the open house, and then support for the faculty after the open house as the students were actually out of school for a number of days. And so, a pretty careful plan was being crafted and there was input from myself and quite a few other people.

DF: Did you talk about the fate of the building where the shooting took place?

SP: Yes, I did. I indicated I was asked when I responded to the shooting at Columbine High School, what did I think about tearing down the building. My response, which I shared with the Broward School officials, was unfortunately when we tear down a building, that glorifies the actions of the disturbed young man to a pretty broad level. Period. I recommend that they do exactly what Columbine did, which was basically pretty dramatic remodeling and then re-open with the same building. And I did say, in following school shootings in the U.S. for four decades, there's only been one time that a public school was torn down, and that was Sandy Hook Elementary School, and the cost to rebuild was about \$60 million. And my statement was, I personally believe as a psychologist, \$10 million to remodel it, give it a dramatic new look, new entrance, sky lights, but then spend the other \$50 million on something that might actually prevent the next school shooting.

DF: That would be great if it could work that way. What they did in Columbine was brilliant. And the logic behind it, I guess it's what you presented, was you have to allow the students to have familiarity but to change the feeling of it so that they don't go back in and be re-traumatized. But that they can reclaim it, or claim it anew for themselves. And the

architects can do a lot so that there is both that element of familiarity and a sense that this isn't the same place that all of our friends died. And that's a huge undertaking but a dramatic way of sending a message to the community as well.

SP: This is, you know, a fairly difficult question in terms of making a plan. And to be honest, it's a decision that probably should be made after several months of study in terms of getting input from lots of people. But also recognizing you are not going to please everyone. I did also share that at Virginia Tech, most of the

school shooting. I was very sorry to report that increases in suicides also usually follow school shootings. I talked about the fact that there would be a lot of people volunteering, and that's a wonderful thing that they want to all come help and provide support and specifically counseling.

DF: But it only gets offered for the first, short amount of time. In the crisis mode time.

SP: That's true, but there is the potential given the tremendous resources to keep that going over a period of time. And I also said, in one experience I had, the school was given a lot of money to hire

"...help the faculty first, help the adults, help the staff, help the parents, help them know the typical reactions that children have to a tragedy..."

victims were at a building called Norris Hall, was not torn down, it is now a peace center. So, in other words, it's being utilized for something that's hopefully helpful and preventative.

DF: Re-purposed.

SP: Re-purposed. Absolutely. I shared a couple of other thoughts based on having responded, sadly, to 15 other previous school shootings, and you never know how much of these are actually heard at this particular time because the crisis creates quite a state of disequilibrium. It's really like things have to be discussed, they have to be written down, the key people have to weigh in and have their say. But I said, in all honesty, schools almost always underestimate the impact of a

mental health professionals, but there was no place for them to work. And at Santana High School in California, the decision was made to move a trailer onto campus so the six new counselors actually had a place to work, because school buildings, they just don't have empty offices sitting there. And the counseling needs to be confidential.

DF: It takes a lot of foresight on the part of the school administrators to be able to recognize there's going to be mental health needs here going forward. This extent not only in terms of the amount of students that are affected in the short term but also in the extent of time. This isn't something that gets resolved within a few weeks.

SP: I shared with them, and you've made an excellent point, some psychologists in Israel taught me what they call the 60-20-20 Rule. Meaning that 60 percent of us we would estimate, given our existing support, our coping mechanisms, our family, we're going to be OK. Twenty percent will have some minor problems, but we also have to predict 20 percent will have major problems. And we need to be prepared for things like birthdays that the 17 victims would have had. We need to be looking at milestones, like the graduation ceremony that sadly some kids will not be at. We need to recognizing planning over the long term and even for, unfortunately, the anniversary, which will come on February 14th, 2019. This is all about being there for the long haul. I also shared another recommendation, one that, unfortunately, I've not really seen implemented. And that is the mental health wellness recovery for staff and students needs to become somebody's job. Not something they're trying to do in addition, but it needs to become their job. And that means probably be best to have that be a person already inside the system, but you take away all those other duties, the other 4 things they were in charge of, so that you have a point person who is really following up. Another point that I was really able to make that's pretty straightforward, that it's like help the faculty first, help the adults, help the staff, help the parents, help them know the typical reactions that children have to a tragedy,

"They have a lot of personnel, they have a lot of really great highly trained personnel."

which are regression academically, behaviorally, nightmares, worries, and sleeping problems. Those are not atypical, those a pretty much the concerns for all the students, and we want the adults to respond with patience, structure, tolerance. We want to resume routines, we want to make sure the adults are never talking at kids but talking with them. And most importantly, always be there to listen. I shared that I've been invited back to a few communities even years after the tragic school shooting, and sadly sometimes I hear somebody who lost a loved one say, "everybody tells me I should be over this by now, they say I don't want to hear you talk about that anymore". And we really need to make sure that over the long haul in Broward, in Parkland, at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, there's always going to be permission to talk about it and ongoing help for those that need it.

DF: I love your idea of helping, of reaching out the faculty first because of course not only the kids are not sleeping, that are having nightmares, and are having behavioral disturbances and so on, so are the adults. And they are having to come in and be there for their students in a very open and compassionate way, and they may well not be themselves in a position to offer excellent support for their students if they are also not somehow being taken care of.

SP: I think a couple of really great things about Broward County is we know it's the sixth largest school district in the nation. They have a lot of personnel, they have a lot of really great highly trained

personnel, and our university has provided lots of training to Broward over the years. So, we need to recognize that, but still it's their school system and we discussed lots of ways to support the staff. We talked about the importance of using therapy dogs, which I've seen to just be amazing in helping people to get just a little bit of relief. We talked about doing a lot of special activities for the staff and having things like massages, having plans that hopefully set some limits for staff so that they feel like they get a break from this. And it's almost impossible to outline all the things that have been done to try to help them, but as you and I know, family therapy students have been there. Clinical school psychology counseling students have volunteered, numerous faculty have been there. I know that teams of people have been sent from the schools throughout our state and one of my colleagues that I served on a national crisis team with from Dade County Schools was assigned there for literally weeks along with other key crisis personnel from Dade County.

DF: Oh, that's wonderful

SP: And I think Broward is to be commended for basically welcoming all this support. Sometimes the school district is like, "Oh, we got this covered because we have our own staff". Well, no schools have enough staff in the mental health realm, and then your staff, they actually have other things their supposed to do. It's not like everyone at school can drop every one of their regular duties very long to attend to this crisis. So, it's really wonderful, first of all, that so many people have volunteered, but very important that they actually accepted that help.

DF: Yeah. Do you know what's also wonderful is to see the

young people, the students of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas reach out to, to make a stand, and that commitment to change the way gun policy works in this country is really remarkable. It seems like that's not only potentially going to make a difference for the country, but a huge difference for their own recovery.

SP: You made an excellent point, and I was reflecting on other school shootings where I've been involved, it's really been parents, parents that lost their child at school to a tragic shooting that have stepped forward and there are a number of foundations and those parents are to be commended. There's Safe and Sound Schools, which was started by parents in Sandy Hook, that's focusing on more collaboration between school officials and police. It's also focusing on mental health. Then you also have Sandy Hook Promise, also started by parents who lost children at the Sandy Hook school shooting. That particular organization certainly also focuses on mental health but they are promoting what they refer to as common sense changes for gun laws in our country. Other foundations have been started as well. There's the No Notoriety Foundation, which was started by parents who lost their son in the shooting at the theater in the Denver area, and then you have the I Love You Guys Foundation started by parents in Bailey, Colorado, and you had a foundation in Heath High Schools aftermath

"It should be about survivors, it should be about mental health changes in prevention and not trying to answer the motivation" of this young man."

in Kentucky, which was really focusing on changing the prevalence of violence in our video games, television programs, movies. And then in addition there's also Racial Challenge, founded in memory of Rachael Scott, who died at Columbine High School, which focuses a lot on compassion and kindness, but also focuses on religion as a wonderful way to connect with people. And I often think that every single one of those foundations has a pretty good point. But not enough has been done and that's why you are bringing up the students, perhaps this is the first time that we've really had a significant movement led by students. And I for one am 100 percent behind them and am just hopeful that it will continue and really be embraced by high school students and college students all around the country.

DF: Social media is really playing a huge part. It's a relief for me to see social media really being useful, being helpful, in a situation like this because so often it contributes to the danger that the students are experiencing. It can contribute to the contagion effect of suicidality and so on, but in this instance, it seems to be a galvanizing force and teenagers across the country are furious and seem to be wanting to make a difference when elections come around.

SP: I think you've made an excellent point, and perhaps at no time in our history could social media really be so productive in hopefully galvanizing everybody in such an important movement. Now I wanted to share with you that

in my class more than a month ago, which was before the shooting in Parkland, I actually printed out for my students my 1999, my first congressional testimony, and I made them read it. And one of them raised his hand and says, "this was three weeks before Columbine", yes, that's right. Another one said, "you could have written this yesterday". And the things that I called for where things like help for kids that are disillusioned and are not connected to their schools, common sense gun legislation, taking guns out of the hands of children in our country. And I shared a lot of examples in my work, and to be honest, I've looked back on that testimony and thought, maybe I talked to much about guns, but I felt strongly about it in 1999 and I feel strongly about it now. It's like, OK, the gun didn't cause the shooting, the gun was the means, but while we were working on all these complex issues that are part of the cause of school violence, it would seem pretty simple to do something about the means.

DF: Well we know that in order to protect people from suicide when their highly agitated, highly desperate, is the most effective thing you can do is limit access to means. You can't rush in and change how their thinking about the end of their life, you can do that over a period of time, and you can support them, get social connections, have a therapist involved. But the immediate thing you can do is limit the ability they have to take their life if they feel like they're that desperate. So, it seems a very logical first step to have the capacity when officials, at whatever level, are concerned about the well-being of an individual who's upset to have some legal means of limiting their access to weapons.

SP: Absolutely, I totally agree with you and you know, this is part of a subject matter we cover in our master's level class on violence. One thing that I've been really concerned about is the extensive media coverage. There are people, and I think they're frankly correct, that say things like, "Whenever we have a dramatic coverage of a mass shooting in this country, unfortunately we can predict another one in a short space of time". So, we've had dramatic coverage and I always like to emphasize what should the story all be about? It should be about victims, it should be about survivors, it should be about mental health changes in prevention and not trying to answer the motivation of this young man. In fact, I think we could fulfill the mission of no notoriety by we won't even mention his name here today. But one reporter and interview that I did said, "OK, but he's still alive. Is he going to be able to give us answers?". And I said, "Well, you know sadly, the school shooters that did survive that horrific day that have been interviewed even more than a decade later, it's like they're never able to give us any kind of an explanation that is helpful to us in terms of knowing what to do". And, so I think that part is really frustrating.

DF: Yeah, they can't get us inside of their head while they're well enough for us to then take all the measures necessary to find them, to find the next one before he strikes. So, it can be a fruitless search that as, and what your implying, which I so much agree, is in focusing our attention on the shooter, we have the unfortunate effect of somehow making that person a potential hero for other disaffected youth. And then there's some

kind of competition around, can I meet your record or go beyond it? With an idea of somehow notoriety being an avenue for a sense of self or a sense of meaning we are not going to be able to solve the problem that way, but as we know from Australia, there is a way to at least profoundly limit the potential for mayhem, and that is you end access to weapons of mass destruction.

that takes over, and just a sense that well we'll just have to put up with this. This is why I'm so charged by these young people who are fed up and are willing to stand up and look politicians in the eye and say I don't want it to be this way anymore.

SP: I totally agree with you and I think it's important to recognize that some of the Stoneman Douglass Students

"...I think, to be honest, all of us need to step up, all of us need to make sure that our voice is heard, whatever your viewpoint, we need to make sure that our voice is heard."

SP: You make an excellent point, and without going into too much detail about the changes in Australia, it would make a lot of sense that the U.S. would actually look at some other countries around world. What is it they're doing that we're not since other countries have so few gun deaths, and just be open to maybe as a country we don't actually have all the answers, and some other countries, like Australia, like Scotland, made some changes and maybe we should look at those also.

DF: What can happen is the other effect of ongoing media coverage is we can become a nerd. We just take it as a dangerous place to arrive at, a sense of helplessness, there's nothing I can do despite the fact that, what, 84 percent, you might know the statistic, of American's are in support of limiting access or ending access to semi-automatic weapons. Still, the legislators, who the NRA have them in their pocket, are unwilling to act, and so there can be a malaise

are old enough to vote. All of them will be old enough to vote in a very short period of time, and I do hope that our politicians will pay attention and I think, to be honest, all of us need to step up, all of us need to make sure that our voice is heard, whatever your viewpoint is, we need to make sure that our voice is heard. There's one other area that's really concerned me in that I hear statements all the time about how big a problem school shootings are, I talk to people that feel like the next school shooting is right around the corner right in their particular school. And I want to say clearly that I believe one violent death on a campus in America is totally unacceptable. But, all of the data still shows that schools are actually the safest places children can possibly be. I'm really sorry to tell you most kids in America get murdered in their own homes and if not in their own homes, in the community. Now, it'll be a while before we have the

absolute data for the 2017 and 2018 school year, however, I know the data from last year, 2016 to 2017, Everytown, U.S.A., which is actually an organization that promotes gun law changes, so if anything, they could possibly be accused of exaggerating. So, here's the data from last school year: there were 14 incidents, K-12 schools, where somebody was shot. That was 14 too many, most of those were accidental, but there are more than 129,000 K-12, and all I ever ask is that we be careful not to scare kids about a place where they should actually feel safe. And of course, school administrators should always welcome the input from students themselves, what are your ideas to make our school safer? I actually think school safety is primarily an inside job, so we need to welcome their input, but when we hear stories like 18 school shootings in the month of January, we have to really define, and what are we talking about. And I'm talking about an incident where somebody purposely goes into a school with the intent of harming and shooting someone. Not something that happened a few blocks away, not something that was a domestic violence incident, we just need to have a better definition. And I wish there'd be more focus on the things that schools are doing to increase safety.

DF: It's the nature of media that our attention is drawn to the horrific. And so, you have a school shooting, and as you mentioned earlier, all of the networks bringing in reporters and so on. And, so, we properly bring our attention to the tragic death of these 17 people. What also gets lost in that knee jerk response to tragedy is that we

aren't aware of the number of high school students, middle school students, elementary school students who are taking their lives through suicide, losing their lives to suicide far, far exceeds the numbers killed by somebody else by many levels of magnitude. And we don't bring our attention to it in large measure, I think because the administrators find it difficult to look straight at the potential for children dying by suicide and to take proactive action to protect. It's very, very difficult. It's possible to respond once a tragedy's happened, but to be proactive is difficult.

SP: Well, you make a great point and we do know nationally that suicide is the second leading cause of death for teenagers in pretty much every state, except there are actually a few states in the west where suicide is the number one cause of death. And we need to realize there's often a connection between school shooters and suicide. The last really comprehensive study we had, which was from the Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education, indicated that about 2/3 of school shooters were actually suicidal. And I think it's really important that we make the point that school shooter are not normal kids. School shooters are kids with pretty serious mental health problems. They're usually motivated by either getting even for a grievous injustice or they're after glory, there's the research we're familiar with from Dr. Langman indicated that they're the three types, they're either the psychopath with no conscience, they're psychotic where they do not have a good contact with reality, or they're the category referred to as traumatized, as

depressed, with a lot of adverse childhood experiences. There's been a lot of focus, and a lot of finger pointing in Broward County, and I think the point we should make is that there will be a careful study, sometimes it takes more than a year before there will be a total report where objective people evaluated the response of schools, the Department of Children and Families, the F.B.I., the Broward Sheriff's Department, there will be a report that will give us some answers at some point. And I think it's important that we really just focus on recovery for everybody affected, which as you know, it's reverberated throughout our county, I mean this isn't only Parkland, this is something that has impacted the entire county school district, and in some way, has impacted virtually every person whether you're connected to a school or not.

DF: Yes, well I thank you for all that you do and the wisdom that you bring to that and thank you for the conversation.

SP: It's my pleasure, and people have helped in so many ways and I know that you've been in conversation with various school personnel, and you did a session here for therapists, and I think you're going out to help in yet another school. So again, I think Broward has lots of resources but they're smart enough to realize we need all the help we can get in the aftermath of really what's a staggering tragedy, and I know we both share the hope that maybe something will change.

DF: That's a beautiful way to end.

SP: Alright, thanks.

INTERVIEW WITH LORI ALHADEFF

With Scott Poland Ed.D.

Scott Poland [SP]: We do a newsletter here for the Suicide Violence and Prevention office that is available online. In the past, we have interviewed a number of parents and professionals. This is just our way to try and keep up and hopefully get good information out there.

Lori Alhadeff [LA]: Okay great.

SP: First and foremost, I am so saddened by the death of your daughter. I just can't imagine all that you've gone through.

LA: Thank you.

SP: And would you like to reminisce or talk about Alyssa at all? Or would you rather move on to more specifically things that you are working on?

LA: No, we could talk about Alyssa.

SP: I mean I would just love to know what were the things that you loved about her the most?

LA: So Alyssa was a beautiful, spirited, outgoing kid. She had her friends for life. We always kept busy. We went from one activity to the next activity. She was really smart. She was taking high school credit classes in middle school. She was your all around American kid. She loved boys, she was very social. She was sort of the entertainment director, she got her peers together to say "hey we're going to go to the mall or carnival, or beach." She loved the beach, and riding the waves. She loved walking on the beach and watching the sunset. I found out later that she and a couple of her friends jumped off a bridge at

Deerfield Beach one day. She took risks as any teenager does. I feel that in the fourteen years, she lived a full life. She was a soccer player. She played since she was three years old. She was really amazing, she played travel soccer. Her soccer jersey number was eight and she picked the eight because it was the infinity symbol sideways which means forever. And now we say #playfor8 and #playforAlyssa.

SP: Wow, was she from New Jersey? Didn't you guys live in New Jersey?

LA: We did. She was actually born in New York.

SP: Oh okay.

LA: Yeah, we were living in Queens at the time.

SP: Have you been able to keep in touch with some

of her friends?

LA: Now, yes. Her best friend, I talk to and get to see. And some of her other friends too. I go and watch her soccer team play once in a while. They are all really amazing. But some of her friends have kind of gone their own way and I don't see them.

SP: Now what is your background professionally in terms of work?

LA: I graduated from the College of New Jersey. I was a health and physical education teacher for four years at a public school for K-9th grade and one year at a private school for students with language based disabilities in grades 9th-12th. I coached soccer, cheerleading, softball, volleyball for 5 years. I had my 3 children and then was a stay at home mom for the last 14 years. During that time, my family and my kids were my life. I was a

soccer mom and heavily involved with every aspect of the game. With 3 kids on travel soccer teams, organizing, fundraising and transportation to games became a full-time job.

SP: Absolutely, now where was Alyssa in the birth order?

LA: Alyssa was the first child.

SP: And now your school background, that must come in very handy now working with the Broward County school board.

LA: Absolutely, my teaching background and experience will help me make decisions for positive changes.

SP: What made you decide to run for the school board, Lori?

LA: After the tragedy of February 14th, I started a non-profit organization called **Make Our Schools Safe**.

Our mission is to make schools safe for all kids in all schools. Our family sat Shiva for Alyssa for a week. Everyone, I met felt that change was needed. No one, though knew how to make those changes happen. It was clear to me that if I wanted change, I needed a seat at the table. If you want to get the job done, it's best to do it yourself!

SP: Could you tell me a little about the foundation and the primary goals for Make Our Schools Safe?

LA: Yes. When I was developing Make Our Schools Safe, I thought about 9/11 and what transpired with regards to airport safety and the hardening that was done. Schools need to bring in safety experts to do threat assessments and then implement that plan. Awareness must increase within schools. Bullets do not discriminate and it could happen at any school,

"Alyssa was a beautiful, spirited, outgoing kid... She was your all around American kid."

anywhere. School buildings need single point entries, armed law enforcement officers, and locked doors to classrooms and offices are essential components. Also, we need more mental health counselors I do not think teachers should be armed. We need to give our teachers more money, resources, and respect. After February 14th, families and other elected officials in Florida helped passed the State Bill #7026. As a result, we have mandated law enforcement at every school. Unfortunately, though, this does not happen around the country. **Make Our Schools Safe** is trying to bring this awareness to all schools statewide. In my mind, the best way to do this is through schools being able to start a Dream Team Club. The kids that make up the Dream Team club become the activists. The Dream Team Club students become the voice that brings awareness to the subject of school safety and change. I am super excited to have Dream Team clubs started in New York and in Florida. Additional clubs are starting in New Jersey and Pennsylvania as well. These kids are already meeting with their principals, school board, and local law enforcement. Trying to just bring awareness is half of the battle. We need to make the safety in the school a top priority. If we become numb to these school shootings and another piece of a news broadcast, what have we achieved?

SP: Those are great points and I have often felt that school safety is an inside job and how important it is to get students involved. Tell us a little bit about Alyssa's law in New Jersey and what that's all about and its status?

LA: So, the Alyssa law is now going to the Governor's desk

any day now in New Jersey to be signed into law. Basically what that will be is that every school in NJ will be required to have a panic button so that the teachers can push if they see a threat and press the panic button. It automatically alerts law enforcement because time is life. We need to get law enforcement on campus as quickly as possible. It is true that a shooting can be over in 6 minutes or less. So that 6 minutes, we need to make it as quickly as possible for law enforcement to get on the scene and take down the threat. Because it is going to save lives because time is life.

SP: Absolutely, very important. I

LA: The entire subject of guns in this country is extremely polarizing. People go to the right and people go to the left then we forget about making schools safe. That is why I am focusing on school safety. We all can agree this is important.

SP: And to one point, I know that it has been frustrating to talk about change in regard to guns?? but not much has happened. I know that you put on community events. I was pleased to be one of the speakers at one of your events but can you talk a little bit about your purpose and your goal for these community events?

LA: Sure, do you want me to

"It was clear to me that if I wanted change, I needed a seat at the table. If you want to get the job done, It's best to do it yourself!"

noticed that on the website for the foundation, you have a number of partners. Could you talk a little bit about those partners? And I think several of them are foundations started by other Stoneman Douglas parents.

LA: Yes, after the tragedy, a lot of people started different organizations and I looked at it very positively. This is not a solitary effort. It takes sometimes a village to make change. Therefore, coming together as a group of people will make a greater impact.

SP: I know for example that Everytown for gun safety is listed and would you mind sharing your views about if you think we need to do something different about guns in our country?

talk about the Friends of Make our School Safe?

SP: Sure, why don't you tell us more about the Friends and then we will come back to the community events.

LA: We are lucky to have many invaluable friends of Make Our Schools Safe. MSD alumni have been extremely supportive in trying to make actual change and fundraise. SOS Parkland focuses specifically on schools and school safety. Safe Schools for Alex is also focusing on school safety. Max wants federal school safety guidelines. Everytown for gun safety is working on responsible gun ownership.

Meadow's Movement is Andrew Pollack's organization that tries to focus on school safety as well. Walk

Up Foundation is Ryan's foundation which focuses on the mental health aspect of school safety. The company called LA Cle Co. sells the bracelets for Make Our School Safe. The Sock Problems directs its efforts toward socking out gun violence. They sell socks to raise money. Trying to sock out gun violence. Blue Spear Solutions is the security specialist group that I consult with about school safety measures with faculty and student trainings focusing on Stop the Bleed. They have been extremely wonderful. School safety must come to a mean layers and layers of protection, it is not just one specific thing that we are going to do. We have to be proactive.

"...I wanted action, I want him to do something, I want him to take the guns out of these kid's hands and off the streets."

SP: Has Broward implemented the Stop the Bleed Kits? Is that a goal that Broward has had to make those more available?

LA: Yes, they are getting faculty training for the teachers in all of the Broward County schools. Some schools already started training. I believe that each school has one or two kits already. The kits must be placed in a safe zone in each classroom. I am working with Senator Lauren Book to mandate that each Stop the Bleed kit will be put in every classroom. These Stop the Bleed Kits can make a difference and be essential in saving lives.

SP: That would be great. Well anything else you want to say about the Friends of Make our School Safe?

LA: No.

SP: So, you put together community events, can we talk

about your goals for those? And have there been several or was that your first one last week?

LA: As far as community events go, we had several trainings. One training was with the Stop the Bleed Kits sponsored by Blue Spear Solutions. Another training was on Suicide Prevention which Make Our Schools Safe paid for these trainings.

SP: Was it QPR or Assist?

LA: It was Assist.

SP: Okay, great.

LA: Assist and there was one more with it. It was a two-day class and then there was a one-day class as well.

SP: Okay.

LA: Okay, it was Safe Talk.

SP; Okay, very good.

LA: We have done fundraisers, but as far as events, we did the faculty kits, suicide prevention and the event we did with you the other night.

SP: And who are most of the people that attended last week?

LA: A lot of them are parents that were there. Parents in the community.

SP: Did you get much feedback about the session?

LA: I did. They really enjoyed the information. We were on Facebook live as well, so the program go hundreds of views that way as well. I know one of my friends whose son left his iPhone on the bus and he said "Dr. Poland was right about the phone, get them a flip phone." I think it was a big eye opener for the parents regarding the juling, the drugs, and bringing awareness to people. I just think it's all so important; the information about the suicide prevention and how knowledge is power. The more parents who are educated about what is out there and what is happening, the more of

impact it will have on our kids. Even for the BSO officers to remain informed is helpful as well. SaferWatch a new app created to anonymously report a threat or tip of any kind, has also added a mental health piece to the resource as well. Have you ever seen the app?

SP: No, I haven't.

LA: When you download SaferWatch, you will see that they added suicide threats and self-harm. They added details for when you click on the suicide part, it asks for details about when and what is happening, and you can upload photos, add media, record something and then submit the tip. Because of our presentation, they added mental health concerns and an LGBTQ harassment as one of their incident types!

SP: All of those sound very important. Now the school board and the foundation, this must have become like a full-time job for you.

LA: Honestly, February 14th began my activism and it has changed my life. The death of Alyssa changed my life forever. I would love to go back to February 13th and for life could be exactly the way it was before the tragedy. Did you see the CNN interview whereby, I was ranting out publicly to President Trump to make changes to safeguard our children?

SP: No, I haven't, but I am sure I would agree.

LA: If you Google Lori Alhadeff, February 15th CNN you will see what happened. I went to Park Trails and told a reporter I had something to say, that reporter told me she wasn't on the air. The next reporter I went to just handed me a microphone and said you'll be on in 10 seconds. And then I spoke.

SP: What was the essence of your message to the President?

LA: It was that I wanted action, I want him to do something, I want him to take the guns out of these kids hands and off the streets.

SP: Well those are all great points. What are your thoughts about what should happen to the perpetrator? I should try to avoid saying his name because I am so tired of hearing his name and seeing him on television but what are your thoughts about legally what needs to be done?

LA: I think justice will be served and the people who missed the tips and everything else on this kid, that they will be held accountable for. As far as the shooter, I think that the death penalty is too easy. I think that he should go through the regular public jail with general population inmates and not just some type of private prison. I know that can't happen. If he is going to be in regular jail, then I think he deserves to be with all the regular inmates, not just in a private location.

SP: Yes, good point. What is the future projects or what are your goals in the next few months for the foundation and your important work?

LA: So we have some really exciting fundraisers coming up. At the end of the day, we want to raise money to help put money back into the schools. We just launched a fundraiser. The first school I wanted to help is Westglades Middle School because that is where my two boys attend. There will be 60 butterflies. Each butterfly can be purchased for \$1,000. We have an artist, Evan Haubner, that will create on canvas, the Make Our School Safe logo. In the O's, there will be an infinity symbol. The infinity symbol will have 60 butterflies and around the canvas. It is going to be a piece of art hung in the school. Included could be a business

logo, or a family name. 60 butterflies will raise \$60,000. Then, Make our Schools Safe will then match that \$60,000 for a total of \$120,000. Other important school hardening projects will include single point entry, fencing, and ballistic protection in the school.

SP: Sounds great, money well spent. So that is the next big project, wonderful.

LA: So I actually wanted to say that we already have 20 butterflies sold and have 40 more to go.

SP: Okay.

LA: We will always raise money to help with school hardening. However, I would like to set up another event

forcing anybody to do anything. It's just trying to have this available for them. If this meets their needs and they want to do it, it could help. It will not cost them any money at all. We also have our annual tennis fundraiser. Last year we raised \$30,000. This year we are going to have 2 women round robins in the morning and then at night have a kids roundrobin. The kid's roundrobin is the new to our fundraiser. We hope to raise \$50,000 this year.

SP: Sounds great and anything else you'd like us to know and like to have mentioned in this interview write up?

LA: Well, definitely if you could put our website www.makeourschoolssafe.org

"I know therapy is different for every person. So, what might work for one person might not for another person, and that's okay. We're not forcing anybody to do anything. It's just trying to have this available for them."

similar to one we had the other night with the speakers and the education piece. The other event that I am planning is related to the mental health aspect. Therapy or group therapy is really important. I think a lot of kids and families are suffering in silence so we need to try to do something. I know there are all these different places that people can go to for help.

SP: Yes, that makes sense. I mean long term help is going to be needed for children and their families.

LA: I know therapy is different for every person. So, what might work for one person might not for another person, and that's okay. We're not

[afe.org](http://www.makeourschoolssafe.org) and if somebody wants to start a dream team club in their school, they could contact us.

SP: Anything else you'd like to say today?

LA: I Just know that your voice makes a difference. If you believe in something, you should speak up about it. If you think something is not right, then you should speak up about it because your voice is your power.

SP: Great point, if the Suicide Violence Prevention office can help in anyway, please don't hesitate to contact us.

LA: Okay, great thanks. One of the things that I am really concerned about and I've spoken about is the fear that

there is someone planning their own suicide now for February 14th on the one-year anniversary. I would love to know if you have any ideas or tips on how to reach kids in need or what we could do to help them?

SP: That's a great question. We need constant vigilance for suicide prevention and in my opinion, it can't be site based in our schools. Every school needs to be doing suicide prevention, doing our best to try and call the warning signs to the attention to parents. The vast majority of suicides can and should be prevented.

LA: If you have a flyer or anything I can help push out on social media, that would be a great help! Every parent wants the fast information that doesn't require effort to read. I don't know, would you have anything like that?

SP: Well, I think that Dr. Marcus and I could work on something. Let us give that some thought and in two weeks, we are presenting to all the Broward social workers about suicide prevention and we're always able to help Broward county to

help in any way possible. All they have to do is just ask us.

LA: That's great. I think for me, what I am worried that on February 14th some kids are going to want to do community service who are your outgoing, go-getters, and popular. However, we really need to focus on those that aren't your strive kids and maybe looked at as different in a way. The kids that are wearing all black, hoodies, and that are suffering in silence. Those kids are the ones we need to be helping more. I feel that we aren't doing a good job doing in that sense.

SP: That's a great point. We want every student to feel connected to the school and the staff and to be involved in something. Anything else? And thank you so much for agreeing to the interview today. We will type it up and send it to you and we can make any revisions or modifications that you wish.

LA: Sounds good, thank you.

INTRODUCING YOUR SVP TEAM:

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Tuesday-Wednesday
9:00 am – 8:00 pm

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Scott Poland, Ed.D.
Douglas Flemons, Ph.D.

Graduate students looking to write articles on the topics of suicide and violence prevention are encouraged to contact us.

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SVP Presentations

The Office of Suicide and Violence Prevention has provided 300+ presentations to various departments at NSU.

SVP has presented to over 6,000 NSU faculty, staff, and students, on a variety of topics related to suicide and violence training, management, and mental health struggles.

Use this link to request a presentation:

<https://www.nova.edu/webforms/suicideprevention/presentation-requests/index.html>