

October 17, 2016

Dear Mr. Bower, Ms. Herrman, & Ms. Opfar,

My name is Stephanie DePalmer (formerly Stephanie Stahl), and I am an alumna of the Rockwood Area School District having graduated with the Class of 2006 as the class president. Since then I have earned my M.Ed. and specialist certificate in K-12 School Counseling, my national certification through the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC), and my license as a professional counselor in the state of Pennsylvania. I have been a practicing school counselor for four years, and I am currently a secondary school counselor in the Northern York County School District in Dillsburg, PA, which is located just outside of Harrisburg and Gettysburg. I give you this background for a very specific reason that will soon become evident.

On October 3rd, 2016, one of the sixty-two students that made-up the Class of 2006 died by suicide, just ten years after graduating from RAHS. Luke Tressler had so much life left to live, and it was cut woefully short by a lethal decision. My classmates and I have remained in touch with the use of social media, and collectively, our hearts are heavy having lost a friend and classmate so unexpectedly. In our sorrow, this experience has moved us, and we feel called to do something meaningful in his memory.

Having a background in mental health and school counseling, and on behalf of the Class of 2006, I would like to make a proposal for your review and consideration. Because we know that suicide is preventable, we would like to purchase and donate the SOS Signs of Suicide® High School Program for Rockwood Area Junior/Senior High School. It is an award winning, nationally recognized, and evidence-based suicide prevention program specially designed for students ages 13-17. The premise of the program is to provide education on how to identify the signs and symptoms of depression and suicidality in themselves and their peers, while also encouraging help-seeking behaviors through the ACT® Technique (Acknowledge, Care, Tell). It utilizes the Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression (BSAD) to surface students who are at-risk and allows us to channel them to a caring adult who can assist them in getting the help they need.

Prior to my current position, I was a middle school counselor and then a high school counselor in the Waynesboro Area School District in Franklin County, where we implemented this program at both levels. I had the opportunity to be on the steering committee to implement it at the middle school level for the first time ever. Because I had experienced the undeniable effectiveness of this program first-hand at WASD, I have since introduced it to my current district at Northern High School, where we are now implementing it in our ninth grade health classes. Both school districts found value in supporting such a powerful and valuable tool to be proactive and preventative about something so critical. Moreover, we are championing prevention efforts in the wake of Pennsylvania Law Act 71, where it “...*specifically permits school entities to incorporate curriculum on this topic into their instructional programs...*”¹

Because there may be factors that I am not considering, I have included information at the end of this letter that provides resources for you so that you can explore this program further and decide if it would be a good fit for your school and district. I also acknowledge that this may not be

¹ www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Pages/Act-71.aspx#tab-1

something that can be implemented or addressed right away as you have many responsibilities and may need to receive school board approval in order to make it a part of the curriculum. However, if the decision is made to move forward with our donation, I would like to extend my support in getting the SOS Program off the ground.

For all of us that work side by side in education, we recognize the heartbreaking reality that some students face, so by implementing school-wide suicide prevention efforts, we can empower young people to seek help for themselves or others by providing lifesaving education before it is too late. This tribute could have a lasting effect on the students in the Rockwood Area.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns, and I would be grateful to receive a response when you reach a decision about whether you choose to implement this program or wish to respectfully decline.

My classmates and I want to extend our sincere appreciation for giving us your time and consideration as we are Proud of our Past, Promoting Our Present, and Focused on Our Future.

Sincerely,



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Resources

PDE Website Endorsement of the Use of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Programming:
<http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Pages/Act-71.aspx#tab-1>

Website to the SOS Signs of Suicide® High School Program:
<https://mentalhealthscreening.org/programs>

The SOS Signs of Suicide® Online Gatekeeper Training:
<https://mentalhealthscreen.org/gatekeeper>

Screening Mental Health Youth Programs Shop:
shop.mentalhealthscreening.org/collections/youth-programs

Produced By: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

10 Leading Causes of Death, United States 1999 - 2014, All Races, Both Sexes

Rank	Age Groups										All Ages
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
1	Congenital Anomalies 86,271	Unintentional Injury 24,890	Unintentional Injury 15,958	Unintentional Injury 19,194	Unintentional Injury 222,773	Unintentional Injury 225,726	Unintentional Injury 255,545	Malignant Neoplasms 783,357	Malignant Neoplasms 1,632,928	Heart Disease 8,377,291	Heart Disease 10,306,081
2	Short Gestation 71,862	Congenital Anomalies 8,185	Malignant Neoplasms 7,631	Malignant Neoplasms 7,657	Homicide 80,096	Suicide 86,994	Malignant Neoplasms 220,806	Heart Disease 586,234	Heart Disease 1,069,231	Malignant Neoplasms 6,305,508	Malignant Neoplasms 9,050,567
3	SIDS 34,453	Homicide 6,096	Congenital Anomalies 2,993	Suicide 4,407	Suicide 69,641	Homicide 71,346	Heart Disease 192,030	Unintentional Injury 285,149	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 211,346	Cerebro-vascular 1,985,043	Cerebro-vascular 2,297,875
4	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 25,864	Malignant Neoplasms 6,053	Homicide 2,108	Homicide 3,143	Malignant Neoplasms 26,398	Malignant Neoplasms 59,150	Suicide 106,182	Liver Disease 126,301	Unintentional Injury 189,911	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 1,825,646	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 2,125,089
5	Unintentional Injury 17,415	Heart Disease 2,748	Heart Disease 1,468	Congenital Anomalies 2,882	Heart Disease 16,547	Heart Disease 51,322	HIV 58,381	Suicide 119,142	Diabetes Mellitus 179,475	Alzheimer's Disease 1,134,458	Unintentional Injury 1,870,064
6	Placenta Cord Membranes 18,773	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,876	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 867	Heart Disease 2,235	Congenital Anomalies 7,102	HIV 20,882	Homicide 47,741	Cerebro-vascular 95,272	Cerebro-vascular 167,112	Diabetes Mellitus 842,868	Diabetes Mellitus 1,156,786
7	Respiratory Distress 11,981	Septicemia 1,248	Influenza & Pneumonia 838	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 1,150	Influenza & Pneumonia 3,212	Diabetes Mellitus 10,107	Liver Disease 44,248	Diabetes Mellitus 89,566	Liver Disease 132,768	Influenza & Pneumonia 807,658	Alzheimer's Disease 1,146,748
8	Bacterial Sepsis 11,113	Perinatal Period 961	Benign Neoplasms 713	Influenza & Pneumonia 848	Cerebro-vascular 3,052	Cerebro-vascular 8,823	Cerebro-vascular 34,259	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 63,958	Suicide 80,261	Unintentional Injury 612,633	Influenza & Pneumonia 930,370
9	Circulatory System Disease 9,075	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 864	Cerebro-vascular 600	Cerebro-vascular 741	Diabetes Mellitus 2,768	Liver Disease 7,133	Diabetes Mellitus 31,363	HIV 58,772	Nephritis 67,627	Nephritis 588,189	Nephritis 707,975
10	Neonatal Hemorrhage 8,319	Benign Neoplasms 852	Septicemia 567	Benign Neoplasms 631	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 2,725	Congenital Anomalies 6,858	Influenza & Pneumonia 15,044	Viral Hepatitis 36,095	Septicemia 66,428	Septicemia 424,203	Suicide 560,632