



FAMILIES RENEWED, INC.

SPRING 2022
VOLUME III NUMBER 1

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM BRUCE NORTON

Last year was a very active year for us, especially in our self-harm and suicide prevention program, and the activity doesn't seem to be letting up anytime soon. We teamed up with a group of volunteers who started an event series called Building Bridges for Brianna. It was created in the memory of Brianna Dorgan who lost her life to suicide on December 3, 2020. The purpose of the event series is to raise awareness to the problem of teen suicide. We were honored to serve as an incubator for this fledgling organization and look forward to the future as they grow, and to our combined team efforts to solve this growing and senseless tragedy.

Last year also saw the launching of our flagship solution for the prevention of suicide called LifeBST (Life Behavioral Skills Training). While LifeBST targets the demographic of 10 to 24 year-olds, it will have a positive impact on all age groups. LifeBST is an evidence based comprehensive approach to self-harm and suicide prevention that strives to solve the problem before the childhood trauma that is most often at the root of these mental health issues is encountered. We have the support of the local mental health systems as well as educators and lawmakers. Mental health professionals have called LifeBST a, "Game Changer," in mental health as it relates to self-harm and suicide prevention.

Once we have been able to deploy LifeBST we hope to be able to take this prevention philosophy to other high risk groups such as first responders, physicians, nurses, and others engaged in emergency services as well as those in the armed services.

Turning our attention to our Finding Home program that strives to help those children and families facing

homelessness or the threat of homelessness, we saw an increased need locally last year, and by all indications that need will increase this year as well. The increased need last year was fueled by problems in the Pennsylvania unemployment compensation system. The biggest impact was felt by those who are furloughed annually such as school bus drivers. We were able to provide financial support for several families who found themselves without the income they relied on during the summer months. Those problems are still unresolved. When added to the runaway inflation we are experiencing as a nation today, it is likely the need to support those facing homelessness will increase dramatically this year as well.

Finally, I am immensely grateful for all of our supporters. Regardless of how you have supported us or how much you have given, you are making a real difference in the lives of children and families in need. I especially want to thank the families and businesses in and around Delta, PA and Airville, PA. Many have gone well above and beyond to support the work we do. I am deeply humbled by your generosity and your efforts. Thank you. Please tell people about the work we do. We are still largely a well kept secret.

“Mental health professionals have called LifeBST a, ‘game changer,’ in mental health as it relates to self-harm and suicide prevention.”

CASS (A SUCCESS UPDATE)

If you have visited our website at www.familiesrenewed.org undoubtedly you have read about Cass and her story which she so eloquently told from her perspective. She had been engaged in self-harm through starvation and had not eaten for more than a month.

Well, not only has she become a beautiful and well adjusted adult, but she is now married and recently gave

birth to a beautiful child. Armed with her childhood experience, we have no doubt she will be a wonderful mother. Congratulations, Cass, we are so very proud of you and the woman you have become.

THE AMERICAN FAMILY VS. FAMILIES IN 16 OTHER NATIONS

When we created Families Renewed, Inc., in 2013, it was based on the idea that much of the suffering we are experiencing as a society has roots in the erosion of the traditional family unit that for so long has been the bedrock on which strong societies are built. In looking at the impact of these issues on the future of capitalism, economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton coined the phrase, “death of despair,” in 2015¹. They define death of despair as deaths due to suicide, overdoses, and alcoholic liver diseases.

They took a very clinical look at these issues and found that we are hardwired for things such as food, comfort, friends, and companionship through a reward of the release of dopamine which gives us a transitory feeling of euphoria. Case writes that we have found a way to replace the transitory nature of dopamine with the longer lasting euphoria produced by alcohol and opiates which also changes the trigger that produces it.

Case and Deaton then look at the fact that humans need a longer childhood and adolescence than other animals because of the size of our brains. They point out the fact that it takes about 20 years for us to develop the skills we need as adults. They also make mention of the fact that our frontal lobes are not fully developed until the age of 25.

I need to mention that it is actually the development of the prefrontal cortex that takes 25 years. The prefrontal cortex is the judgment part of the brain and controls emotions and impulses. Compare that to the development of the nucleus accumbens that is fully

developed in early adolescence. This is also often called the pleasure center and seeks rewards. This is a primary difference between the adolescent brain and the adult brain and is more often than not the explanation for the difference in adult behavior vs adolescent behavior.

Getting back to deaths of despair, Case writes that since we need that additional time in childhood and adolescence, the support we receive during that time is critical to our development and to the future of a society. The problem is that the structure of the American family has changed from a multigenerational family to a single parent family in the last 50 years. This makes our period of dependency more uncertain and reduces the number of moments of dopamine rewards. The deficit in dopamine rewards then leads us to seek more rewards through self aggrandizement and high risk behavior. When those efforts fail to produce the quantity dopamine rewards we seek, we turn to self-harm; suicidal ideation; and often, substance abuse which increases the prevalence of overdoses and alcoholic liver diseases.

“Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him.”

Psalms 127:3

- Single parent households have quadrupled over the last 50 years to over 16 million in America.
- 25% of all American children are raised by a single parent.
- Single parent households are three times more likely to deliver preterm or low birth weight infants

They compared the US to 16 other wealthy developed countries and found the number of single parent households in the other 16 countries was significantly lower than in the US, the number of preterm and low birth weight infants was well below that in the US, and the rates of suicide and other deaths of despair was also greatly lower. The positive impact of a stable family on the development and mental health of our children is undeniable. Please support the work of Families Renewed, Inc., to build and support stable families.

¹ Case and Deaton - 2015 - Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among wh.pdf.

YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS CRITICAL TO OUR SUCCESS

Prayer Partners: In general we need prayer warriors to pray for the children and families we help as well as for us individually and for the success for Families Renewed in general. To receive emails with specific prayer needs, please go to www.familiesrenewed.org and sign up as a prayer partner.

Giving Partners: We are funded solely by generous people like you. You can support our mission by sending gifts to our mailing address below, through our website at www.familiesrenewed.org, or by texting the amount of your gift to 717-775-7008. You can track your giving history through our website at www.familiesrenewed.org as well.

- MAILING ADDRESS: 644 SHREWSBURY COMMONS AVENUE, #261, SHREWSBURY, PA 17361 •
- CRISIS PHONE: 866-7-HELP-ME (866-743-5763) • OFFICE PHONE: 717-428-3140 •