



HOPE RESILIENCE RECOVERY

# Suicide awareness saves lives

*Thrive brings suicide prevention tools to high school and community*



Anyone can save a life. That's an empowering message for students at Oak Park and River Forest High School, who are learning suicide prevention skills in trainings provided by Thrive Counseling Center.

"This was good training for real-life situations that everyone should be prepared for," said one student. "It really helped me understand the warning signs."

"I learned a lot about how to help friends," said another student.

Thrive launched prevention trainings at OPRF last fall as part of the health curriculum. More than 1,000 students, including all freshmen, will have completed Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training by the end of March. The program builds awareness and provides tools to connect someone in crisis with professional help.

"We really feel that Thrive is providing life-saving training," said Ginger Colamussi, OPRF Student Assistance Program Coordinator. "We have many students and families impacted by mental health issues and suicide. Thrive's training gives our students skills to know what to do if someone in their lives may be having thoughts of suicide. They are learning to recognize signs and to guide someone to professional support."

Suicide deaths are on the rise nationally and locally, with an average of six deaths each year in Oak Park and River Forest. There were more than 1,400 suicide deaths in Illinois in 2016. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for people 15-34 years old.

"The key to preventing suicide is to create a space where we can talk openly about it," said Kristen Keleher, LCPC, Thrive Community Engagement Manager. "When people hear the statistics, they often feel helpless. Training gives them a sense of empowerment that comes from having more knowledge and being part of the solution."

Thrive's suicide prevention initiative aims to make Oak Park and River Forest a "Suicide Safer" community. Since 2018, Thrive has provided training to hundreds of local police and firefighters, teachers, health care workers, clinicians, and ordinary community members. In addition to QPR, Thrive offers SafeTALK Suicide Prevention Training. Both trainings are evidence-based.

Funding for suicide prevention comes from Amity School Children's Aid, Rotary Club of Oak Park-River Forest, and Women Leaders in Philanthropy, a part of the Oak Park and River Forest Community Foundation. For more information contact Thrive at 708-383-7500, ext 206

## How a loved one's addiction affects YOU

"What about us?" is a question addiction expert Mary Ann

Daly, MA, LCPC, hears a lot.

Daly, a therapist for 30 years, will offer guidance for family and friends of those with alcoholism or other addictions in a free **Thrive Talk from 7-8:30 p.m. on Thursday March 5** at the Oak Park Main Library, 834 Lake St. in Oak Park.

The presentation will examine how individuals are affected by a loved one's addiction, and how efforts to help the addict may get in the way of recovery. Daly will offer strategies for the painful challenges that accompany loving an addict. Learn how your own self-care can help your loved one get better.

**Thrive Talks** are free and open to everyone. For information about **Thrive Talks** or to view past presentations, [click here](#)



## Sibshops offer fun and support for siblings of children with special needs

Sibshops, a program designed especially for brothers and sisters of children with disabilities, offers peer support in a lively recreational setting at Thrive Counseling Center.

The program brings together children in grades 1-7 to have fun and share the good and not-so-good parts of having a brother or sister with physical, developmental, emotional or mental health challenges. Trained facilitators supervise activities that spark conversation and ideas, and lead age-appropriate break-outs. Thrive launched Sibshops in 2015 in partnership with the River Forest Township.

"At Sibshops, kids learn that they are not alone... that other kids have brothers and sisters with disabilities and challenges," said Carla Sloan, River Forest Township Supervisor. "Sibshops is a safe environment where kids can share the ups and downs of having a special needs sibling."

Sibshops meets from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month at Thrive Counseling Center, 120 S. Marion St., in Oak Park. The program costs \$10 per session, with lunch included. Need-based scholarships are available. Advance registration is required and priority is given to River Forest and Oak Park families. Sibshops is a curriculum developed by the Sibling Support Project.

For more information or to register, contact Laurie Johnson at [ljohnson@thrivecc.org](mailto:ljohnson@thrivecc.org) or 708-383-7500 ext. 409

## Thrive is the Oak Park and River Forest Community Mental Health Center



**DONATE NOW**

Thrive Counseling Center offers crisis intervention, psychiatric treatment, individual and group therapy, and an array of wellness programs

Contact Thrive at 708-383-7500 or visit [www.thrivecc.org](http://www.thrivecc.org)