Breaking the Silence to Prevent Suicide and Save Lives
A media-led collaboration to prevent suicide through responsible reporting

The Reality of Suicide and the Promise of Hope:
Journalism That Makes Communities Safer

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INVESTIGATING SUICIDE
Prevention reporting that makes a difference
40 Newsrooms
100 Stories
Oregonians say about suicide

<table>
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<th>US</th>
<th>Oregon</th>
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<td>Suicide</td>
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<td>34%</td>
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<td>About suicide</td>
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<td>Evictions</td>
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Epidemiologist who studied data found new solutions

By AMANDA WALDROP
Street Roots

When Kimberly Repp saw how high Washington County’s suicide numbers were each year, she vowed that she would do something about it.

Repp is the supervisor of the county’s public health program and is a county’s epidemiologist, which makes her responsible for tracking and responding to diseases that affect public health, such as annual flu outbreaks.

Kimberly Repp, Washington County’s epidemiologist, visits the scene of a death. Her work at these scenes has helped her develop a list of risk factors that contribute to death by suicide.

COURTESY PHOTO: WASHINGTON COUNTY
Shining a light on suicide in Oregon
SHATTERING BARRIERS

Survey: Oregonians are more likely to think about suicide — but also more willing to prevent it

By ZANE SPARLING
The Tribune

Oregonians are more likely to consider suicide than the average American — with nearly one-third across the state reporting that they’ve considered taking their own lives, according to a new poll.
Schools gear up for new laws addressing teen mental health

Suicide prevention, redefined sick days, help end stigma

By COURTNEY VAUGHN
The Tribune

If it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to save one.

Two new laws aimed at destigmatizing mental health and preventing youth suicides will take effect in schools this year, but experts say laying a better path for young people requires a “community approach.”

In Oregon, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people age 12 to 24.

Data from a 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens survey shows that roughly 18% of high school juniors and nearly 17% of eighth graders reported they had seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months. For LGBTQ youth, the prevalence is even higher.

In 2019, the parents of a teen who took her own life, backed by advocates from Basic Rights Oregon, lobbied state lawmakers to do something about that.

The call to action came in the wake of high school student Adi Staub’s death. Staub, who came out as transgender during her sophomore year, died in 2017. Her parents noted she often was misgendered, sometimes intentionally, and despite expressions of self-destructive thoughts, the gravity of her suicidal ideation went unnoticed by her peers and teachers at school.

In response, Staub’s parents fought for schools to adopt more robust protocols for recognizing suicidal behavior. The result was Senate Bill 52, known as Adi’s Act.

Adi’s Act requires Oregon schools to develop “a comprehensive district plan on student suicide prevention for students in kindergarten through grade 12.”

The prevention plans must include methods to address “high risk” groups like homeless students or those experiencing trauma, students of color, those with disabilities, mental illness or substance abuse problems, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (also known as LGBTQ) youth.

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State invests to save students’ lives

Bills making way through Legislature changes how Oregon deals with suicide-prevention for young people

MARK MILLER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregonians die by suicide at a rate well above the national average. Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Legislature have taken notice. This spring, a number of proposals are before the Legislature to bolster state and local officials’ ability to respond and prevent suicides — including one that would bring Oregon in line with most states by requiring every public school district to adopt a suicide-prevention plan.

Adi Staeb, who took her life in 2017, struggled to fit in as a transgender teen, despite the support of her family and many friends. A bill requiring all Oregon schools to develop suicide prevention plans is named after her.

PREVENTION FUNDS LINKED TO EDUCATION BUDGET

With state expenses growing faster than its revenues, legislative budget writers are looking at cuts in nearly all areas. Public education is a notable exception — which could mean good news for suicide prevention efforts.

“I think most of the focus on suicide prevention is around young people,” House Speaker Tina Kotek said, noting that lawmakers also are looking at ways to improve counseling and support services in public schools. “The problem is, we don’t want to start something like that if we can’t fund it, and really, the only way to fund it is if there is additional dollars through the investment pack-
#BreakingTheSilence
1.4 Million Impressions in a Week
The Results so far:

- The campaign hashtag #breakingthesilence.org saw over 1.4M Twitter Impressions

- Legislative Impacts
  - Adi’s Act
  - Mental Health Day
  - $11 Million in New Suicide Prevention Funding

With the success of the first series came an important revelation:
Where are the stories from diverse communities?
They are students, musicians, tech workers & entrepreneurs. They have one thing in common:

THEY ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AND SURVIVED

HERE ARE THEIR STORIES

By JEFF TRUESDELL
Photographs by DESE’RAE L. STAGE
Goal for the next BTS run is to make sure all communities are represented

When you invite community members to define their own needs and to participate as full partners in decision making, you are acknowledging them as the experts in their own lives, families, and communities.

This approach builds trust and respect and is well worth the time invested. A community-guided approach will contribute to more effective programming as well as to community ownership and sustainability.

- Cultural content, norms and beliefs, privilege and power issues, disparities in access to care, and historical trauma experienced by minority groups.
- Having sensitivity toward differences in communication styles and making concerted efforts to reach out to special populations are both key in building strong relationships and in increasing cultural responsiveness.
- Trust and respect

Goal for the next BTS run is to make sure all communities are represented
Every year, nearly 50,000 people in America die by suicide and tens of thousands of people think about suicide, but instead, find a way forward- a path toward hope.

But almost no one know these stories. Journalists have always shied away from reporting on suicide - we don’t tell the story of suicide and we don’t tell the stories of hope either.

It’s time to **Break the Silence on Suicide nationwide.**

*To learn more about this model, view the [Breaking the Silence in Oregon video](#)*