



ALL IN THE FAMILY

Here is what's happening at FSS!

November 2020



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Local Outreach for Survivors of Suicide: LOSS Team

Someone dies from suicide every 40 seconds around the world. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people 10-34 yrs old and the numbers continue to increase. Family members, neighbors, friends, and loved ones (also known as “Survivors of Suicide” or “SOS”) are left to navigate through grief on their own.

Family Support Services, City of Amarillo Public Health, Texas Panhandle Suicide Prevention Coalition, and local advocates have teamed together to begin a new initiative for Amarillo called Local Outreach for Survivors of Suicide or “LOSS Team.” This response team provides support from mental health professionals and community members who have experienced suicide loss themselves. LOSS Team instills connection, empathy and resources as individuals walk their grief journey side-by-side instead of alone.

Why is LOSS Team so important?

It is estimated that each suicide drastically affects 6-9 individuals. Survivors of Suicide are up to 5 times more likely to complete suicide themselves. Current LOSS Teams document a decrease in resource utilization timeframes from 4.5 years to 4.5 months and some as little as 39 days after the suicide of a loved one. The model is known as a “Postvention is Prevention” tactic to assist loved ones in finding the help needed for healing from their tragic loss.

Currently, there are 70 LOSS Teams across the nation in the active or planning phase. Amarillo will make its mark as the 4th active response team

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for the whole state of Texas as of December 2020.

Volunteers Needed!

LOSS Team is currently seeking volunteers to provide support for our community. Please contact Jennifer Potter, LOSS Team Coordinator, if you or someone you know may be interested in helping with our team! JPotter@fss-ama.org (806) 342-2549

From the Crisis Services Team



The Crisis Team worked diligently during October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, with a focus on events and awareness mostly through social media. With only a few live events (an awareness table at WTAMU, awareness tables at Amarillo College, Hoctober Fest FSS table at the Amarillo Bulls game, and Chalk the Sidewalk) the team engaged in social media activities to draw in

participation (Walk a Mile in her Shoes, One Thing video for Survivors, Paws for Peace), and distributing agency and partner information (Amarillo City Council Proclamation, Highlighting community partners in the work against domestic violence). Many of these events were new events—"necessity is the mother of invention." Since we couldn't engage in our tried-and-true live events, our team focused on engaging through social media, which generated some great responses as well as collectively engaging many of our partners in our work.

Crisis Advocates are actively doing their part to keep fellow staff and clients safe in the midst of our area's pandemic response. Much work can be done at home, while also being able to connect with victims and survivors using the phone and virtual meeting platforms. Additionally, the team members are continuing the work of creating informational videos about sexual assault and domestic violence, our partners and continuing services. We will continue to provide support groups online for the foreseeable future.

Safe House Updates

The Safe House has been very busy with programmatic and environmental updates. Over the course of the pandemic, the Safe House team has been challenged with how to safely serve others. With the help of grant funding, iPads and toys were purchased to keep clients engaged in virtual case management as well as giving the children fun and educational tasks. We are also working with our team to provide more virtual support groups.



Our wonderful Maintenance Technician, Vaughn Worcester has diligently worked to complete the renovation of the Safe House. On top of his day making repairs and cleaning, he has repainted and assisted in redecorating the entire Safe House. The work is not completely done yet, but with the help of the Junior League of Amarillo, we have been able to make a huge difference in our clients' environment.

We have recently added several new team members, each of them bringing skills and talents to the Safe House that we have been needing! If you see them around, please give a warm welcome to Tania Fuentes, Tiffany Richardson, Estrella Valdez, Ben Harrell, and Mary Strong.



The Safe House Team continues to work non-stop on ways we can best serve our community and stay safe during COVID-19. We continue to stay open for survivors needing safety!

Education & Prevention News

From the H.O.P.E.S Team:

H.O.P.E.S has been thinking outside the box in order to keep social connections for the families. We offered a musical group connection that allowed the families to safely social distance and still interact with other families and the parent educators. Each family member was

allowed to decorate their own instrument, learn the sound, incorporate it into a song, and do a creative dance move. Parents learned the importance of allowing their children to be creative in their own way and taking their lead in play.

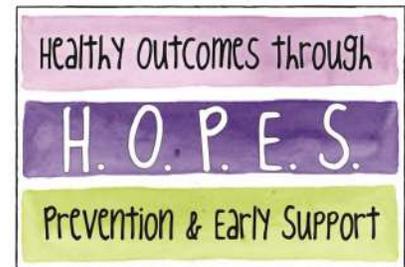
One parent educator offered a virtual monster hunt for her families that weren't able to get out. The kids got to listen to clues and hunt for the silly monsters that were hidden in the common places. They learned to listen, effectively communicate, problem solve AND take turns. The families commented on how much fun they had and how nice it was for them to see other families.

We have followed strict safety protocols in order to continue home visits this past month. The families have expressed how grateful they are for us continuing to serve them face to face. They shared the need for social interaction and someone to talk to.



The team has focused on doing Facebook live videos and some quick tips for parents as they are dealing with the challenges of COVID-19. We talked about creating a safe place for the children; teaching them breathing techniques and utilizing items to calm down in high emotional moments. This allows them to learn how to self-regulate.

We also shared key steps for parents in regulating emotions in times of stress so they can parent in their best form. Parents have shared that they have been using these tools and it has aided in reduced stress and stronger connections.



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Human Trafficking Services:



In the past month, Ashley Knowles has worked on expansion of the Freedom in the 806 Coalition Against Trafficking to begin including an outreach component to reach victims in targeted areas across Amarillo. She also began a collaboration with the juvenile probation office and Children's Home to provide prevention education to their clients. She has also coordinated the Prevention and Awareness subcommittee to bring an Online Safety Campaign to social media platforms and is collaborating with healthcare workers to provide education and training on human trafficking.

COVID-19 has provided many eye-opening moments for us surrounding the issue of labor trafficking. The most important are the gaps in service for a very vulnerable population right in our backyard. Lus Chavez has been working both on the front lines and behind the scenes for the last two years following her passion for social justice and the opportunity to act when needed most, when a global pandemic interrupted our world.

We knew from the start that farm workers are, of course, essential personnel. They have labored throughout the ordeal from start to present. Initially our outreach to farm workers consisted of taking masks out to the workers once shelter in place regulations eased up. It was quiet in the beginning, but as the pandemic travelled up the northern Panhandle, we heard the outcries. Farmworkers were becoming sick. They continued to work; in most cases, it



was demanded of them. They were not being quarantined, and they usually live in communal housing and share rooms and restroom facilities. Testing for COVID-19 was nowhere in reach. The closest facilities were in Amarillo, in most cases, an hour and half away. Most of our farmworkers are here from Mexico on a work Visa that requires employers to provide transportation for them, so they do not have access to their own means of transportation. Even the really sick didn't have a way to get to Amarillo. Food and medicine were not always provided to sick workers and they were only going to the

here is what's happening at FSS:

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hospital when they were desperately ill, and if a fellow worker was able to borrow a vehicle. Some resorted to calling 911 and were transported by ambulance for medical attention.

Once we heard of the situation, we rapidly came together and formed an immediate response team to tackle these issues, and others we were not even aware of at the time. The Texas Workforce Commission formed part of the team. Their farmworker advocate was able to reach out to other government entities such as OSHA and the Wage and Hour Division of DOL for help and guidance. The Texas Department of State Health Services was able to direct us to hotels in Amarillo that were available for quarantining sick workers. They worked closely with the National Center for Farmworker Health to collect data from our outreach efforts and send it up to the proper authorities to coordinate on-site testing for workers.

We are still waiting for more access to testing, but we are confident that it will be available soon. Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid and Northwest Texas Legal Aid were able to support any legal questions and take on farmworker cases as the workers requested representation for injustices they had endured while sick. The Cactus Nazarene Ministry was able to coordinate food drop-offs for sick workers with the outreach team from the McCain Institute and the help of Snack Pack 4Kids. The MET Program assisted with connecting us to other agencies who were working with the same populations and doing some outreach also. We also consulted with the Salvation Army, Texas Panhandle Centers, and University of Texas Science in San Antonio for ideas. Transportation is something we are still currently working on; we are looking for a stable source to be able to provide transportation in rural areas for sick workers. Many other entities have collaborated with us to begin to fill those gaps, but there is a long road ahead and many injustices to conquer along the way.



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What's Happening in the Community Youth Development:

We have begun to slowly and safely reintegrate into the schools to begin in-person groups and presentations. Linley Laster has been spending her mornings at Johnny Allen Sixth Grade Campus doing groups focused on ***Coping with COVID-19*** and ***Managing Anger***. McKabry Hollis is providing Peer Mediation with eighth graders in the Mann Mentors program at Horace Mann Middle School. She has also launched a youth-led podcast called ***That's***



Why where we interview our community's many inspirational leaders in order to discover their reason why, and encourage Amarillo's youth to do the same. This month, we have a YAC members conference where they will speak on their experiences with service learning, and the Amarillo Adolescent Health Summit where they will answer questions over issues such as teen pregnancy, mental health, and sexual assault.



The Strengthening Families and Prevention Team:

All team members have been working on an innovative prevention video series aimed at providing educators and other youth serving organization content in the virtual world to help youth and families stay informed.

Issues addressed are diverse and include a large focus on substance abuse, mental health, and teen dating violence.

Sabina Farmer wrapped up a video series called ***Social Life*** that uses humor and creativity to discuss the tough topic of having safe and healthy relationships. In front of the camera, Sabina is such a brilliant and entertaining



actress/presenter! Of course, our in-house music and production gurus, Teddy Larios and Joshua Bonnett, created dynamic content. Josh focused on music and its effects on the body and mind and Teddy didn't hold back his outgoing and risk-taking personality in his ***Aware 806*** series breaking down substance abuse issues

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and engaging in an impactful interview with a local hero, David Elizalde. David lost his daughter in a drunk driving accident and since her death, he has been committed to creating awareness about drinking and driving by sharing his story. Teddy also started back to face-to-face school-based education sessions in Vega schools and at Tascosa High School. Shout out to Josh for creating a super unique and debatably the best – EVER intro song for the *That's Why* youth-led podcast! Josh also completed a full face-to-face Sounds of Success cycle at the Amarillo Children's Home. A compilation of the songs they produced are available to listen to and download on SoundCloud (soundcloud.com/soundsofsuccessamarillo). In September, Josh worked on a virtual series called *Musical Medicine*; a program that can be used



to improve mental health. A total of four videos were created and will soon be available on the SFP YouTube channel. If you wish to view those videos now please email Monica Balderas at mbalderas@fss-ama.org.

Josh and several members of the education team had a virtual series in October where they read aloud various children's books for the younger elementary students in the area schools.

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day: November 21, 2020

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is an event in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience. Please visit <https://afsp.org/international-survivors-of-suicide-loss-day> for a full list of events across the world as well as helpful resources.



Veterans Resource Center

Gearing up for Veterans Day : November 11, 2020



The theme for the 2020 Veterans Day Poster is *Vision: Veterans in Focus*. “Looking back on centuries of Veterans’ service and sacrifice and what we have learned from the past, we must always maintain the vision for the future of Veterans. Putting the Veteran at the center, on Veterans Day we continue to honor all who served, while focusing on the needs of the next generation of Veterans. “ - VA Statement

Veterans contribute to American society in many ways, not just during their time in active duty. Throughout our history, military service members have put on their uniforms to protect the values and liberties that this nation was built on. That does not stop once the uniform comes off and their time in active duty has ended.

Veterans take the lessons they have learned and become leaders, scientist, and entrepreneurs. Veterans are the most active volunteers working to improve communities across our country. Service goes beyond the uniform. This Veteran’s Day, we honor the men and women who have worn their uniform and who continue to serve our country.



Due to the pandemic, there will not be a local parade. The Veterans Resource Center will display relics of hometown Veterans and provide lunch on a small scale for safety purposes.



The Panhandle Gives 2020



Help Family Support Services during The Panhandle Gives Nov. 23-Dec.1!

We are excited to participate in the Amarillo Area Foundation's The Panhandle Gives campaign this year in conjunction with #GivingTuesday. FSS and more than 150 area non-profits will benefit from a multi-media campaign, sponsorships, and the opportunity to share our mission and vision with people from throughout the Texas Panhandle. This year's campaign goal is \$2 MILLION and you can help FSS meet our goal of \$25,409 . . . matching the number of lives we touched last year!

Your donation designated to Family Support Services will be eligible for additional match through the Amplification Fund provided by sponsors and other gifts. Here's how to make the most of your donation:

1. Give a gift designated to Family Support Services Nov. 23-Dec. 1. These are the only dates for donations to qualify for amplification!
2. Donations must go through the Amarillo Area Foundation (see ways to donate below.)
3. No donations that come directly to FSS or through social media or PayPal count toward amplification.
4. Help us fundraise by asking your friends to donate or by issuing a challenge!

Ways To Give:

1. Online at: thepanhandlegives.org/organizations/family-support-services-of-amarillo-inc
NOTE: AAF has generously agreed to cover the credit card fees for online donations this year to encourage online giving during the COVID-19 crisis.
2. Drop off a check at a participating bank: Amarillo National Bank, Happy State Bank, or FirstBank Southwest. Be sure to make the check out to The Panhandle Gives and write Family Support Services in the memo. We will receive the full amount of your donation!
3. Go to our page at thepanhandlegives.org to create a challenge or set up a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign.



Remember this link for online donations or to set up a challenge:
thepanhandlegives.org/organizations/family-support-services-of-amarillo-inc

For questions or assistance please contact:
Joette Campbell, jcampbell@fss-ama.org or 806.342.2503.

FSS Leadership Team

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Center

Veronica Villanueva

Director of Administrative
Services

Our Mission is "to empower individuals and families through comprehensive advocacy, education, and intervention services." Fulfilling our Mission will help us reach our vision of "a community where individuals and families are healthy, stable, and violence-free."

Our Core Values

- Empowerment of families and individuals for success.
- Nurturing environment for staff and clients.
- Service to the community, clients and staff.
- Respect for the dignity and confidentiality of all individuals.
- Sound fiscal management



**FAMILY
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SERVICES
OF AMARILLO**

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