



Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

9th Issue

December 2016

TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Greetings from the President

Nhung Hendy

I hope this Newsletter finds all of you well. It is hard to believe that another year has come to an end. In this issue, you will find a moving reflection of Sara Kerr, a past recipient of TNF scholarship. Sarah is now a marketing senior attending Towson University. Her memories of Joe brought tears to me. I'm so thankful for Sarah's stories without which I would not have been able to see that side of Thao/Joe. Thank you, Sarah, for sharing your memories of Joe with us. Continuing with the mission of promoting mental health awareness, you will find that we included in this issue recent research review on mental health treatment.

I am glad to announce that the Fifth Annual Thao's Into the Light Race will take place on Sunday, May 7th 2017 at the NCR Trail, Sparks Nature Center, on the grounds of the beautiful Gunpowder Falls State Park. Please mark the date on your calendar and join us. We also need volunteers to organize the event successfully. If you are interested in volunteering, please send me an email at nhung@tnscholarshipforthearts.org.

Please help us in making our next year's 5K run and 1 Mile walk another success. Thank you in advance for your time and support! Together, we'll make a difference in mental health awareness and suicide prevention.

As the holiday season is upon us, please consider making your year-end tax-deductible donation to TN Foundation. Donations can be made securely on our web site www.tnscholarshipforthearts.org. There are also two other ways to support the Foundation. First, when you shop for holiday gifts on Amazon, make sure you use the smile.amazon.com link. When you first shop using this link, you can choose TN Foundation as the charity of your choice. Each time you shop, Amazon will donate .5% of the proceeds to our foundation. For those of you wondering about the price differences, rest assured that there are absolutely no price differences between the amazon.com and smile.amazon.com sites.

Second, when you buy or sell on eBay, you can designate a portion of your proceeds to TN Foundation. We could not have achieved this much without your donations and support. On behalf of the Board of Directors, please accept my heart-felt thanks for your continued support. Have a healthy holiday season and a very happy 2017!

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Save the Date! 5/7/2017

Thao's Into the Light Run/Walk

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Memories of Joe

By Sarah Kerr

Although Thao is her name, I knew her best by her nickname: Joe the girl. Joe had always been around - In the halls, with a vivacious smile. I finally got to hear the laugh that accompanied her smile in debate club. I loved watching her defeat the boys and argue with them over seemingly trivial things. Maybe she was really passionate about them. Maybe she liked to argue. Or maybe it was her chance to show people her power. She liked to hide, but when it came to debate, she shined. We started bonding over boys, especially one named Connor. Both of us giggled when we talked about how bad he kissed.

It was hard for me to make friends in high school. I had been dealing with an eating disorder since I was 13 and it was hard for me to connect with people. Joe welcomed me with open arms and we started going to the mall. She'd drive around in her old car and play the Arctic Monkeys before they were cool.

She had an amazing light around her; people were attracted to her like moths. And, she wasn't shy about it either. I have to laugh as I type this. On one of our mall adventures, she brazenly flirted with an Apple genius. His boss wasn't amused... we were escorted from the store, but we didn't care. It was a memory. Be bold. Get excited about little things. These were two things that she taught me.

When she started to attend Drexel, we didn't lose touch. I came up one weekend and experienced my first college frat party. I was 17. We went dancing and ate insomnia cookies together on the subway back home. Joe was magnetic. Vivaciousness followed her anywhere she went. I wanted to be just like her, to experience as much as possible; soak it all up like a sponge.

I was looking forward to seeing her again during an upcoming visit in March of 2013. As I was ready to book my mega bus, I got a strange Facebook message telling me not to come. She assured me that she was just stressed and that we would get together soon enough. Joe left us all 2 nights later.

After the initial shock, I guess what I felt most was a sense of guilt. I told myself that if I had just seen her that weekend, or talked to her more, then I could have stopped her. Maybe I was even responsible?



Photo credit: Ted Hendy

Joe/Thao at a Sunday market in Aix-en-Provence (2012)



The truth is it is hard for anyone to lose someone they care about. But, people should not have to bear the weight of a suicide on their own shoulders. This is easier said than done. I know; it has taken me years to accept the fact.

But, anyone who knew Joe would agree that she hated to hurt others. She was the girl full of hugs and laughter. If you were having a bad day, Joe could sense it. She would tell you the cheesiest jokes until you had no choice but to smile. There is no way that she would want anyone to remain sad. Instead, she would want all of us to take life by the horns and go on adventures.

So to anyone reading this, I believe we meet people for a reason. Whether through her writing, her art, or her loyal friendship, she was able to touch each and every one of us in different ways. My advice: Use her example to live life to the fullest. Explore new cities, listen to as much music as you can, be kind, and stay humble.



IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE

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Obesity and Bipolar disorder: A meta-analysis

Summarized from Journal of Affective Disorder, September 2016

A group of researchers from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston conducted a meta-analysis including 12,259 Bipolar Disorder (BD) cases and 615,490 non-Bipolar Disorder as controls. In this meta-analysis, the authors found that there was a relationship between obesity and BD. Specifically, those who were obese were more likely to have bipolar disorder than those who were not. However, the authors cautioned any causal relationship inferences due to the cross-sectional nature of the study. In other words, we don't know if obesity caused BD or BD caused obesity. More research with experimental and control groups and conducted longitudinally are needed to reach more affirmative conclusions.

Suicidal Ideation and Sex Differences in Relation to 18 Major Psychiatric Disorders in College and University Students

Summarized from the Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease, April 2015

A group of researchers led by Dr. Larry Tupler from the Duke University Medical Center conducted a study in which they polled more than 113,000 college students from 1,500 universities and colleges predominantly in the U.S. anonymously about various issues including their suicidal ideation. The survey was a web survey in which respondents were assured of their anonymous responses.

The authors reported that most students experienced depression the most during college, followed by social phobia and eating disorders. Substance-related disorders were less frequently reported than expected. Suicidal ideation occurred in 47.1% of students, with women evidencing somewhat stronger and more frequently than men. Further, suicidal ideation was more associated with substance abuse, bipolar, and panic disorders than depression.

Another finding of the study includes self-reported emotional volatility of the students often exceeded thoughts of self-harm for all disorders. The results support two subtypes of suicide risk: dysphoric premeditators and those primarily angry and/or impulsive.

The authors urge clinicians and researchers to consider suicide as an independent psychopathological phenomenon that includes emotional volatility as a risk factor and thoroughly evaluate psychiatric disorders potentially conferring greater suicidal propensity than depression. The results of this study provide further support that college/university students are at high risk for psychiatric disorder and suicide secondary to age, campus stressors, and social pressures.

Upcoming Event

The following event is made possible by collaborative efforts between Thao Nguyen Foundation and the Counselling Center at Towson University. This event is free and opens to the public.

Movie Screening:

"Infinitely Polar Bear": 6:30 P.M. 2/16/17
In Room 204, Van Bokkelen Hall, Towson University -

