



Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

First Issue July 2013

TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

IN THIS ISSUE

Greetings from the President

by Nhung Nguyen, Ph.D.

Welcome to our first newsletter of Thao Nguyen Foundation, Inc. I hope that you will take the time to read the newsletter as it contains a lot of information about the foundation's activities as well as our effort in fulfilling our mission. Also, please pass this newsletter on to your friends and acquaintances so that we can reach out to as many more people as possible. Our mission is to promote mental health awareness, so the more people we can reach, the better.

As many of you know, when Thao passed away, I asked that in lieu of donations to our family, please send all donations to Loch Raven High School, Scholarship Committee to establish Thao Nguyen Memorial Scholarship Fund. With the outpouring support of friends, the Thao Nguyen Memorial Scholarship Fund at Loch Raven High school

kicked off with a bang! My sincere thanks go out to all who contributed to this fund. I am also pleased to share with you that on May 23rd, I attended the Senior Award Ceremony at Loch Raven High school where the first recipient of Thao Nguyen Memorial Scholarship was named. Molly Sokolis was the first recipient.

On a related note, the foundation is financially healthy. As I write this column, we have raised close to \$4,000. In addition, we raised \$901 from the first annual Thao's Into the Light Race. A check of \$800 was sent to Loch Raven High School and another of \$1,000 was sent to Drexel University to establish Thao Nguyen Memorial Scholarship Fund there.

Thanks for your support and enjoy the first issue of our newsletter!

Greetings from the President

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First Annual Thao's Into the Light Race a huge success

By Nhung Nguyen, President

Thao's Into the Light Race aims at promoting mental health awareness and suicide prevention. We hope to give a hopeful voice to all currently affected by mental illness. The event is held annually and includes a 5K run and 1 mile family walk. For more information, please contact nhung@tnscholarshipforthearts.org



On June 1st 2013, at Cromwell Valley Park, the first Annual Thao's Into the Light Race took place under a warm summer afternoon. Although this was the first time, all details were taken into consideration in order to ensure the event was as professionally organized as possible. A timing clock and a professional timer were generously provided to us by Brian Flowers, M.D. a board member of the Baltimore's Road Running club. Margaret Flowers and John D. O'Connell were our course marshals. A total of 42 runners and 53 walkers participated in this event. A group of 13 volunteers were busy with on-site registration, food and water preparation for the race. Everyone enjoyed listening to live music provided by a local music band whose members were all Thao's friends from high school. A highlight of the day was the organic ice cream donated to us by Prigel's Creamery. Thank you, Marcie DiMarco, for getting us the yummy ice cream. The event was concluded with an

Friends and supporters walk through beautiful Cromwell Valley Park at the First Annual Thao's Into the Light Race

award ceremony. Winning our first place for male and female runners respectively were Jack Flowers and Joslyn Corey. Congratulations to both!!! We also held a vigil "light a candle for Thao" with a small group of friends, each citing an adjective that fit Thao's characteristic. All in all, the 3 hour event was filled with hopeful voice and beautiful memories of Thao. We hope to see you all next year!



Yvette Lane, Richmond, VA, a retired state employee who is a frequent donor to Thao Nguyen Foundation



Father and Son Runners

Father and Son Bob and Jamie Keith from Washington, D.C. running at the First Annual Thao's Into the Light Race.



Forging Future partnership

Linda Raines, Executive Director of Maryland Association of Mental Health spoke at the First Annual Thao's Into the Light Race.

FAST FACTS

6.18 deaths per 100,000 students were caused by suicide

4.86 deaths per 100,000 students were caused by alcohol

Learn more about these sobering statistics by reading the article on the right...

IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE

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Live music played by Thao's friends at the First Annual Thao's Into the Light Race

More U.S. College Students Die from Suicide Than Alcohol-Related Causes, U.Va. Researchers Find

by Sally Jones

Nov. 2011 - Suicide outpaces alcohol as a cause of death among college students, according to the first study in more than 70 years to look at the major causes of college mortality in the United States.

The study, "**Leading Causes of Mortality Among American College Students at Four-Year Institutions**," was commissioned by Dr. James C. Turner, executive director of student health at the University of Virginia, when he was president of the American College Health Association. It was conducted by the association's research department and analyzed by Turner and U.Va. colleague Dr. Adrienne Keller, director of research at the National Social Norms Institute, part of U.Va.'s **Elson Student Health Center**. Turner said the study, the first such research since 1939, also suggests that mortality rates of college students are much lower than the same-aged general population. He presented the findings at the American Public Health Association annual meeting in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 2.

The findings are based on data from 157 schools, representing 1.36 million students ages 18 to 24, which responded to a survey sent to 1,150 institutions. In the survey, schools were asked for mortality rates and causes of death of students between the ages of 18 to 24 for the 2009-10 academic year. "Most previous studies of college student mortality have not looked at

colleges directly, but have used data extrapolated from the general population," Turner said.

The results seem to contradict conventional beliefs concerning the number of alcohol-related deaths, he said. Suicides accounted for 6.18 deaths per 100,000 students, while alcohol was a factor in 4.86 deaths per 100,000. Overall, the No. 1 cause of death was vehicle accidents, at 6.88 deaths per 100,000, about half of them alcohol-related.

But findings also suggest that campuses provide much safer and more protective environments than previously recognized. When compared to the mortality of 18- to 24-year-olds in the general population, college student death rates are significantly lower for such causes as suicide, alcohol-related deaths and homicide. "Hopefully this work will inspire further research to better understand what factors contribute to the protective environment on campuses," he said. One area appears to be an exception. While the rate of suicide is half that for the general population, the rate has not changed from prior reports on college suicide since the late 1980s, suggesting that greater attention should be placed on student services for depression and other mental illnesses, he said. Alcohol education and awareness programs are also needed, as alcohol abuse remains a critical public health problem on college campuses.

Since the sample of schools was not random, caution should be exercised in generalizing these findings to all students in higher education. The sample was very similar demographically to the entire U.S. college population, but was slightly over-representative of Caucasians, public

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schools and institutions in urban areas. Citing the urgent need for a more formalized tracking and reporting method among all college campuses, Turner said he has secured a grant from the Centers for Disease Control to develop a surveillance network that will

electronically link clinical statistics from health services nationally.

"By directly collecting epidemiologic statistics from major campus health services in the U.S., we can provide a much more accurate picture of health trends in higher education," he said.

Shining a Light on Mental Health Justice

By [Margaret Flowers, MD](#)

Most of us know what to do and say when a friend is experiencing a physical crisis such as a traumatic accident or an asthma attack. Yet, when faced with a mental health crisis, we are frequently at a loss of what to do and say. Some fear that talking about mental health is an invasion of someone's privacy or that we may say the wrong thing and worsen the situation.

This lack of knowledge about what to do and reluctance comes in large part because mental health is a taboo in our culture. People who have mental illness are often stigmatized socially and discriminated against when it comes to education and employment. As a result, people with mental illness feel that they have to hide it. Our public policy also sends a message to those suffering from mental illness that they are not valued. Most health insurance policies don't cover treatment for mental illness, and when they do, the coverage is restricted without being based on a person's need. And we don't have an adequate number of mental health facilities, especially for people who have low incomes or suffer from addiction.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than a quarter of adults in the United States are diagnosed with a mental illness each year. One out of seventeen adults is diagnosed with a severe mental illness. Yet, only 36% of those who are diagnosed receive treatment, and of those on treatment, one third of patients receive treatment that is minimally adequate. Many adults (and youth) with mental illnesses wind up in the prison system where they

cannot be treated appropriately. Some are even placed in solitary confinement, even though that is against psychiatric recommendations.

This is why it is so important to de-stigmatize mental illness, one of the last great taboos in this country. It is time to view mental illness in the same way that we would any other physical illness. But this will take education of the public to achieve. Mental health justice requires a cultural shift. Over my lifetime, public opinion has shifted in many areas once considered taboo such as interracial couples, LGBTQ and the use of medical marijuana. All of these shifts occurred after people in those communities pushed to have their rights respected through education, legal approaches and social movements.

Recently, Patrick J. Kennedy wrote an OpEd for CNN about the importance of justice for mental health patients. He explained the impact that President Kennedy's famous speech on the civil rights movement had to shift the public to see it as a moral struggle. He writes: *"As we mark the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's famous speech, the question he asked the American people that evening from the Oval Office remains strikingly relevant -- shouldn't all Americans be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities? Sadly, when it comes to the treatment of people with mental illness, addiction and brain injury, equality remains unattained."*

The time has come to bring the issue of mental health justice into the light. In Thao's memory, let's support people who are called to work in the mental health profession and let's reach out to those who are suffering to support and value them as equal human beings.