



Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

Third Issue February 2014

TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Welcome to the Third newsletter issue of Thao Nguyen Foundation, Inc. (TNF). Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. Since the second newsletter was published in December, it is with regret that I report that we did not receive any research funding applications in response to our first research grant initiative. It is likely that we did not have enough time to promote the initiative. We will try to launch it again this year and hope that it will generate some good applications. Please help us spread the words if you know of any mental health researchers, ask them to apply. The deadline is December 1st 2014.

I'm happy to report that since the birth of TN Foundation (4/26/2013) to December 31st 2013, we were able to raise \$9,000. Thank you to all who contributed to the foundation. An Annual Financial Report will be posted on the foundation web site soon.

Please note that the Second Annual Thao's Into the Light Race will be held in Baltimore on 5/24/2014.

Currently, we are having difficulties locating a venue for the race as the Council at Cromwell Valley Park declined to let us use their facility this year. We hope to find another good location soon. In the meantime, please mark your calendar and join us. More information will be posted on the foundation website soon.

I hope you'll enjoy another informative issue of TNF newsletter. Have a healthy and productive 2014.

Best wishes,

Nhung Nguyen,

President

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Swim for a Cause

By Douglas Sanford, Ph.D.

Why do I swim? Well, not because I am a competitor. I used to swim against others - in order to beat them: for the glory of my team. I also do not swim as part of a fad or an obsession. I simply swim because it is fun, and I will stop swimming when the costs exceed the benefits. I think my current approach to swimming is healthy. I enjoy the challenge of improving my abilities. I enjoy the health benefits. And I enjoy sharing the experience with others. I meet great people, and we form a mutually supportive community.

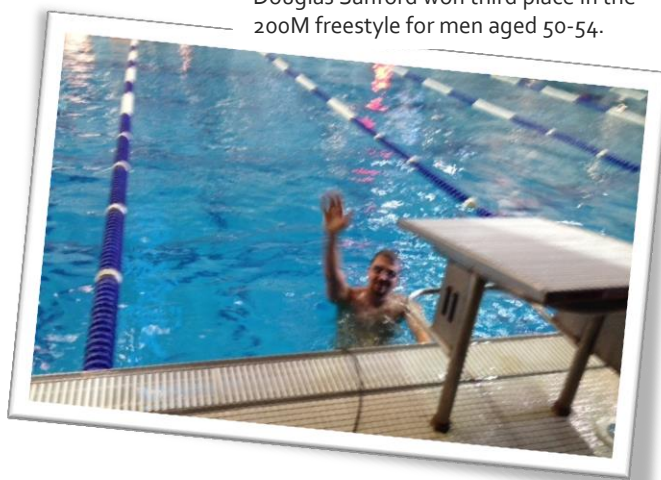
Mental health is a big part of why I swim. I am scared of mental illness, as I have seen it affect others, even family and friends. Swimming improves my mental health. I feel great when I swim. I see the improvement in my physical, mental, and emotional health. Both the swimming and medical communities recognize the false distinction between mind and body. Physical activity can improve mental health.

I would like to share a few facts put out by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the 1999 study, "Mental Health - A Report of the Surgeon General." Mental health is, by definition, "the successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity; ... mental health is the springboard of thinking and communication skills, learning, emotional growth, resilience, and self-esteem."

- Mental health has a staggering cost: it ranks second to heart disease as the cause of lost productivity in the labor force
- Only about 17% of the US population has optimal mental



Douglas Sanford won third place in the 200M freestyle for men aged 50-54.



health

- Depression affects more than 26% of the US population
- About one in five of all ages seek treatment for a mental health issue each year
- Treatments for mental health issues are increasingly effective
- Untreated mental health issues get worse; treated ones get better
- A strong stigma prevents many from seeking help for mental health issues.

This last point is why I dedicated my swim to the TN Foundation. We need to talk about mental health and we need to support each other in our efforts to

improve our mental health. We need to support mental health treatments and open our hearts to those who struggle with mental illnesses. Only together can we make progress and improve our society.



Meet Irene Gray, a frequent donor to TN Foundation



Forging Future partnerships

In an effort to increase the foundation's presence in public awareness, we will sponsor a team of runners at next year Baltimore's half marathon. Contact Ms. Nhung Nguyen at nhung@tnscholarshipforthearts.org if you're interested in joining.

DO YOU KNOW?

Rakofsky JJ, et al (2014) in an article published in *Depression and Anxiety Journal* reported that among essential nutrients/minerals, omega-3-fatty acids (O3FAs) have the strongest evidence of efficacy for bipolar depression, although some studies failed to find positive effects from O3FAs.

Mitsikostas DD, et al.(2014) in a meta-analysis published in *Psychiatry Research* found that almost one out of 20 placebo treated patients discontinued treatment due to adverse events, indicating a significant nocebo in trials for depression treatment adversely affecting adherence and efficacy of current treatments.

IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE

Contact Nhung Nguyen,
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nhung@tnscholarshipforthearts.org

410-663-0207



Thao, outside a restaurant in Aix-en-Provence – September 2012.

Thoughts of a Mother on Mental Health among Youth

By Marcie DiMarco

We seem to have an increasing need for help with our mentally ill youth who have been slipping through the cracks. The cracks in our society have become pot holes and without awareness combined with training and care, we will continue to let those fragile youth on the edge fall off. Reaching out, getting a friend involved, not letting them alone, and active listening are some ways we can step in and help.

Society has become something so shockingly different from the society of my childhood. We used to watch out for one another back when we had neighborhoods. The high school teenager who arrived on the school bus with an unassembled weapon in his book bag to assemble it in the school bathroom was unnoticed by anyone that first day of school. This proved to me that most of us live with blinders on, unaware of someone sitting six inches away. Self-absorbed, taking a selfie, smile for the camera, stare at your phone, talk about your summer vacation, meanwhile signs of mental problems were all apparent, such as having a low self-esteem, feeling unnoticed, a broken life, muttering threats, feeling bullied, and misunderstood.

School monitor up until the college level and then privacy laws take over. Colleges need to check on the ones struggling in need of extra support. Suicidal rates among college students are at a record level high. At Cornell University, their solution was to put nets around the buildings because so many students were jumping off. At Columbia University, in order to prevent suicide, they screwed the dorm room windows shut thinking it was a solution. To me, this is a fire escape hazard.

Colleges could create better systems to deal with increasing population of suicidal students. They could appoint people to check on

students daily, counsel them, and help them cope with the stress while being away from home and having to fend for themselves. Nurses could be in place to assist with monitoring medications. Fellow students could help with a buddy system where each student is appointed a buddy at the beginning of college. They could watch each other's back and report any signs of dangerous behavior. Every dorm room floor should have someone to check on each and every student. This could be done on a volunteer basis. The frustration, fear, and worry parents all have could be alleviated if we knew caring people were watching over our loved ones every single day.

No one wants to believe their child is disturbed and call attention to one's family. Mental illness is embarrassing and it is much easier to pretend and act like the issues are not there. Mental illness is permanent and each illness needs to be dealt with differently. From what I see, every family has someone who is mentally ill. Special care providers, medicines, and hospitals do not have all the answers. If we can reach a place of acceptance and not feel judged, there will not be embarrassment.

Speaking to school counselors, psychologists, enrolling in sports, or joining the military are various ways we try to help. What if it could be this easy? Just because a mentally ill person becomes an adult does not mean he or she can be safely left alone. Do something to help if you see tell-tale signs and hear words from that person leading to going in a downhill direction. Let's all try to do better. Let's all try to lend a hand and watch over each other's youth. We can coax those gone astray by planting healing thoughts with kind words, and conversations towards healing. Get help from peers, go out of your way to speak up, monitor, listen to and report behaviors indicating dangers.