



Our Story

The Beginning

When Victoria Bennis and Maryanne Monaco each lost a loved one to suicide, they found many in the community shared their concern about teen suicides. In response, they started Save A Life in 2010. Their original goals were to:

- *Increase community awareness about the problem of teen suicide.*
- *Educate the community.*
- *Provide resource information for help.*

The organization continues to receive overwhelming support and interest, and Save A Life, Inc., is now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Cary, North Carolina.

The Future

While continuing with its initial goals, Save A Life works to find ways to reach *more schools and communities*. It provides information to specific local *partnering professionals* and gives limited *financial assistance* to at-risk families.

Maryanne Monaco



Victoria Bennis



Co-founders of Save A Life

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Our Goals

Save A Life has several short- and long-term goals. Among our top goal this year is to begin discussions about teen suicide in North Carolina middle schools and high schools. Our strategy is to implement some preliminary curriculums throughout Wake County by 2015 and then expand to surrounding counties.

Our other goals are to:

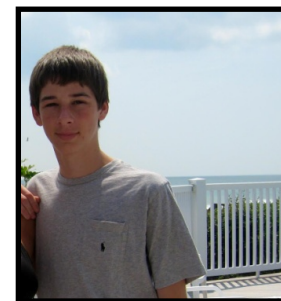
- Further expand the scope and reach of Save A Life.
- Create a Save A Life documentary on teen suicide.
- Reach a financial goal to help fund our scholarship program, documentary, and educational expansion.
- Sustain monthly informational clinics in surrounding schools and community centers.

J&J Save A Life Memorial Scholarship

Save A Life's J&J Scholarship is our attempt to help encourage young adults to look to the future, better themselves, and see their potential as a way to benefit their mental health. The scholarship is educational and to be used for college, university, or other post-secondary schooling.

Applicants can find the application on the Save A Life website (www.helpingsavealife.com); all applicants' privacy will be protected.

Scholarship Value: \$500
Application Deadline: May 16, 2015



Justin Monaco (left) and John Bennis (right)

To be eligible, a student must:

- Be a graduating high school senior attending a post-secondary school by Fall 2015.
- Be able to share a personal experience about mental/emotional health - this can be self, family member, or friend.
- Send proof of enrollment and/or other necessary documents if chosen.

Save A Life Five-Year Anniversary Gala

By Oliver Salman

The night started among friends and families. Conversation quickly warmed up the room as hors d'oeuvres were served and attendees mingled inside the banquet room. Throughout the evening, people made their way to several tables to place a silent bid. When the band started up, dancing ensued.

A gala commemorating five years of Save A Life was held at the Goel's Plaza in Morrisville on February 21, 2015. More than 150 people—parents, children, and teens—gathered to remember why Save A Life was started and learn how we as a community can continue to pursue bigger goals in educating teens about suicide. Tickets were \$60 and, in addition to food and drink, a silent auction was held for gift baskets and artwork donated by local businesses and artists. Save A Life raised over \$5,500 towards their education goals for this year. Midway through the event, co-founder Victoria Bennis



The Smith and Rose families enjoying the photo shoot!

captivated the crowd with a heartfelt speech thanking her friends and family for all of the support the foundation has received in the past five years.

It's a rare opportunity when a community can gather to laugh, cry, and share memories. Save A Life reminded everyone how important it is for friends and family to gather in support of our teens and to remember those we've lost. The Five-Year Anniversary Gala was a huge success and set an example for how communities should pull together.

*"It is a rare opportunity when a community can gather
to laugh, cry, and share memories."*

My Save A Life Experience

By Matt Monaco

Anxiety, depression, loneliness - all feelings no person wants to experience, and all feelings that I had to live with for a long time. When I was seventeen years old, my older brother Justin, a staple in my life, committed suicide at the age of eighteen. The effect this tragedy had on my family was debilitating and left an immense hole in our lives. At the time, I spoke to numerous therapists in an attempt to escape my grief, but to no avail. What I really needed was a peer with a similar experience to my own. I felt alone - alone in my grief and depression. There are many thoughts that crossed my mind, including ending my own life. They only thing that kept me afloat was my family and friends, and the burden that would be forced upon them again if I acted on my thoughts.

At the peak of my depression, in 2010, Victoria Bennis and my mother,

"Save A Life and its members have lived it, and want to help"



"There are many thoughts that crossed my mind, including ending my own life."

Maryanne Monaco, started Save A Life. The proactive approach of the organization provided me with the peer-based experience that I desperately needed. Volunteering at Save A Life's events, including their annual 5K, helped give me closure on my brother and turn my grief into constructive behavior. With the help of Save A Life, and constructive therapy, my prognosis slowly but surely became a positive one.

Today, I would have never thought that I would be in this position seven years ago. I am graduating from college in a month and have been accepted into a Physician Assistant program for Fall 2015. The road was long and painful, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I am living proof of the good that Save A Life is bringing to the community. It helped me turn my life around, and now I am doing my best to pay it forward. If there is one thing I would like you to take from this article, it is this: you are not alone. Save A Life and its members have lived it, and want to help.

Please contact me if you would like to talk with someone. I want people to feel comfortable reaching out to me.

Cell Phone: (845) 542-4482

Email: mmonaco1082@gmail.com

A Save A Life Documentary

By Carrie Pitts

Founder of Just Jack Media and Award-Winning News Producer



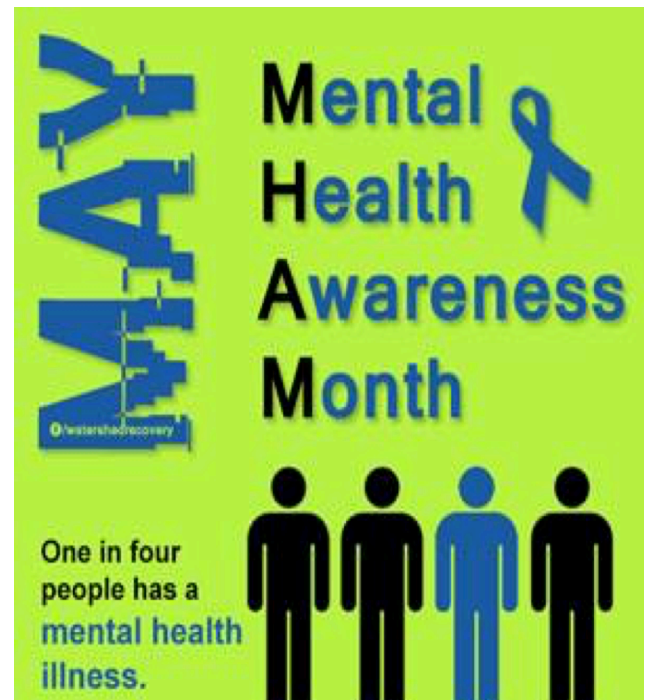
I first met Victoria Bennis and Maryanne Monaco when I interviewed them for a promotional video they were putting together for Save a Life's new website. As I listened to their stories, I started asking questions well beyond the scripted ones because I was so amazed by what they had to say. I was driving home from work that day and it hit me- this organization, this topic of conversation, these stories- needed to be in a full-length documentary. In December of last year, we began shooting with Victoria, Maryanne and her son, Matt. We are working to gain more interviews. Videographer Dart McAdoo and I have volunteered our time so far, but production and distribution of a documentary isn't cheap. When it's complete, we want this video to be far-reaching: on the internet, in schools, and anywhere Save a Life can take it. We need your help to do that. In order to finish production and be able to make hard copies of the documentary for distribution, we are trying to raise \$6000. Not bad for all the lives it could save. We implore you to take a moment to watch a brief clip, which premiered at Save a Life's 5th Anniversary Gala. If you are so moved, please go the foundations website and make a donation today. We thank you, but more importantly, we hope to reach thousands of people who will thank you for helping save a life.

A brief clip may be found at <https://youtu.be/kqlE7zLZPzl>

Please visit www.helpingsavealife.com/donate to donate today

Join the initiative to show support and raise awareness for mental health this month!

- ✓ Participate in the **Green Initiative** by wearing green or passing out green ribbons.
- ✓ Check in on a friend or loved one
- ✓ Educate yourself on new research that is being conducted, advances in treatment, and coping strategies for those living with mental illness
- ✓ Share your new found knowledge to friends, family, and the community
- ✓ Speak out and tell your own story
- ✓ Host an event
- ✓ Decrease the stigma associated with mental health and suicide



Teen Suicide Facts

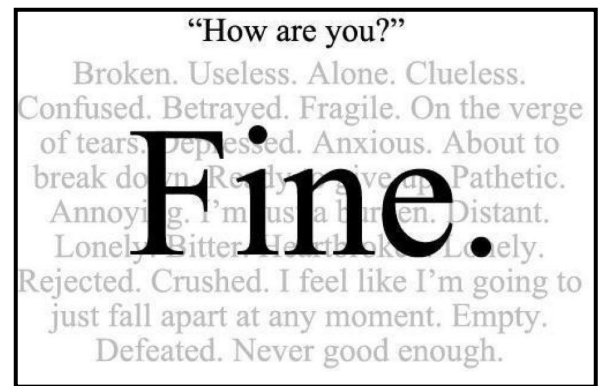
According to the National Conference of State Legislatures:

- **19.3%** of high school students have seriously considered killing themselves.
- **14.5%** of high school students made actual plans for committing suicide.
- **900,000** youth planned their suicides during an episode of major depression.
- Since the early 2000s, teen suicide among those aged 10-14 has increased **100%**.

The CDC reports teen suicide is the **third** leading cause of death for ages 15-24 and the **fourth** leading cause of death for ages 5-14 in North Carolina.

Be alert for these **Warning Signs** in a teen:

- Shows dramatic changes in personality.
- Displays signs of depression.
- Exhibits signs of substance abuse.
- Quality of schoolwork changes.
- Expresses the thought that no one cares.
- Talks about suicide.
- Considers running away.
- Writes poems or stories, or draws pictures, about death.
- Makes plans to take own life.
- Has previously attempted suicide.



What may seem like normal behavior for a teen could be warning signs that are being overlooked.

How to get help

Know

According a *U.S. News & World Report* survey, "teenagers correctly said that drug and alcohol use was a big risk factor for suicide. . . . By contrast, many of the parents shrugged off substance abuse as acceptable adolescent behavior."

Talk

The American Academy of Pediatrics urges parents to ask the child directly about suicide. "Getting the word out in the open may help your teenager think someone has heard his cries for help."

Act

Holly Hill Hospital has an adolescent program that is "highly intensive and designed for those in crisis and/or exhibiting dangerous behaviors."

Phone: (919) 250-7600

Toll free: (800) 447-1800

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

For all emergencies, immediately call:

National: 1-800-273-8255

Local NC: 919-231-4525

Save A Life

200 Lake Brandt Dr.
Cary, NC 27519

Phone:

(919) 819-2531

E-Mail:

Savealifenc@gmail.com

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.helpingsavealife.com



*Save A Life at
Green Hope High School freshman orientation*



Save A Life 5th Annual 5K Race – October 19, 2013