



## ***The Gateway to Life***

***by Dave Morton***

Two people stood on the breezy ledge of the swaying Golden Gate Bridge on the morning of September 25th, 2000: Kevin Hines, the normal, strong young man with plans and ambitions; and the frightened, depressed, tearful coil of pain, feeling unfit and unworthy to live, who knew he must end his life. The old Kevin had been repressed by a bipolar mental disorder, and over a dozen questionable prescription pills which had depressed him even further.

The allure of the bridge's beauty - and its accessibility - drew him to this beacon of hope and validation to end his life, and to make a statement to those he would leave behind: He was a worthy, noble person at his core despite this act, and should be remembered that way by those he loved.

His eyes had begged for help from strangers, but no one on the bridge asked him if he was okay, if he would like some help, if he was suffering, or if he needed a friend, and the feelings of re-confirmed worthlessness crushed what little was left of his low self-esteem.

Crying hysterically, Kevin jumped - only to have his old, strong self suddenly emerge and try to save itself. Fortunately, he survived the plunge, fought his way to the surface, the Coast Guard fished him out of the bay, and he slowly recuperated in a San Francisco hospital. At age 19, he was one of 26 lucky ones who have survived the 220-ft leap. And as the strong Kevin lived, the depressed Kevin began to fade away.

Kevin was an impulsive jumper - not a person determined to commit suicide. As Dan Reidenberg of SAVE explains, "When someone is suicidal they tend to become impulsive and their judgment is impaired. A barrier for the Golden Gate

Bridge would help prevent impulsive thoughts and behaviors from becoming a permanent loss of life."

Kevin agrees. Among the several anti-suicide roles he currently has is being an advocate for a project to build a higher barrier on the GGB to foil impulsive jumpers, giving them more time to get help. As Kevin says, "The trouble with suicide is that it's a permanent solution to a temporary problem."

Today, although still a college student, Kevin finds time for his new life of helping to save lives, often in partnership with SAVE - from speaking to students at Prior Lake High School, to speaking to a local military airlift wing, raising awareness in the community, and giving inspiration to many.

SAVE is honored to partner with Kevin Hines in his life-saving mission. "We are our brother's keeper," says Kevin. He's a keeper, all right.