



New Executive Director Takes the Helm

by Dave Morton

Sometimes Murphy's Law is suspended, for a while, and everything that can go right, does go right. This was the case with finding the right person for the vacant position of Executive Director at the SAVE organization.

Dr. Dan Reidenberg was installed as SAVE's new Executive Director on October 4th, 2004, bringing passion and more than 15 years of experience to SAVE, in direct services, administration, management, and supervision in the social services field.

"I want to create a pre-eminent, suicide-prevention organization and provide resources, referrals, and advocacy for survivors," Dr. Reidenberg stated in a recent interview. "We need to help those suffering from depression - and possibly contemplating suicide, and help the surviving family members when it does occur."

The new Exec speaks from experience: He has had a long-standing, personal friendship with one of the founding members of SAVE, Adina Wroblewski, who is a suicide survivor, herself. Additionally, he's collaborated with Adina, Jackie Casey, and Al Kluesner on various SAVE workshops and events. "I have a deep fondness for SAVE, and a long history with the organization," said Reidenberg.

Dr. Reidenberg graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1988 with a degree in Psychology and minor in Child Psychology. After completing training at the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center and the Minnesota Security Hospital, he received his Doctor of Clinical Psychology degree in 1994 from the Minnesota School of Professional Psychology. The American Psychotherapy Association awarded him "Certified Diplomate in Psychotherapy" status in 1998 and Fellow status in 2004. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the APA Executive Advisory Board and Chair of the Certified Relationship Specialists Board.

Dr. Reidenberg's background includes working extensively with adolescents and adults who are seriously and persistently mentally ill, chemically dependent, and with diverse personality disorders. He also consults with psychologists, attorneys, and businesses on healthcare and legal matters. Dan has testified in over 150 forensic cases at the Minnesota Security Hospital and in Twin Cities courts. For the last 5 years, he was the Director of Family and Children's Service in Minneapolis, where he managed multiple programs and branches. Dan's local and national media and professional credentials are so lengthy, it would take another article to enumerate them.

One of the things Reidenberg has placed on his to-do list is to reduce or eliminate the stigma of the word 'suicide': "The situation is better than it was years ago, but the word 'suicide' still carries a stigma for the victim and the surviving family. By contrast, schizophrenia is more socially acceptable than suicide because people know it has biological roots. They know it's a disease. But depression and suicide are biological diseases, as well. "

The impact of ignorance and the stigma associated with depression are significant. Reidenberg explained, "People often say that the depressed person should pull himself up by his own bootstraps. They're apparently unaware that it's almost impossible to do that. Depression is an illness, and one that usually requires external, professional help, but many still don't view it that way. We know that greater than 90% of people with depression can be successfully treated with medications and therapy; however, we also know that telling someone who is depressed that they are weak, lazy and unimaginative only increases the risk of a deeper depression and possible suicide."

Reidenberg also mentioned the difficulty in acquiring donors for a condition with a stigma attached to it: "Many people are more reluctant to contribute to 'suicide prevention' than to other social or child-related causes. The word 'suicide' seems tainted, so they don't want to be associated with it. It's a significant problem in the United States, and we need to turn that around."

In addition to sterling credentials, could SAVE ask for a more compassionate and eloquent Exec? "For the survivors of suicide victims, it's an endless journey of wondering, doubt, fear, second-guessing, and despair. We must do all we can to save those lost in the hopelessness of depression, and aid and comfort the survivors left behind."

Thank you, Dr. Reidenberg, and welcome aboard.

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