

Breaking The Silence was launched in 2011 following the suicide death of co-founder Annie Fudge's niece, Jessica Schneider. Breaking The Silence is a family run, non-profit organization based in Pembroke, ON. Since the start, this small but strong organization has been working diligently to raise suicide awareness and to support the public, letting them know they are not alone. Breaking The Silence lives by its motto: "Speak UP and Reach OUT, it's ok to talk about it". In 2014, Breaking The Silence worked in collaboration with four other mental health agencies to host Olympic cyclist Clara Hughes in the town of Deep River as she neared the completion of her 12,000 kilometre ride around Canada. Hughes, as part of Bell's Let's Talk initiative aims to reduce the stigma and raise awareness for mental health.

One of the many goals of Breaking The Silence is to erect billboards throughout the Ottawa Valley depicting the face of Jessica, as well as one of many other local individuals whose life has been lost to suicide. These billboards also include a crisis line phone number and the message "Suicide is 100% preventable". There is currently a permanent billboard located on Forest Lea Road in Pembroke, ON. There have been some struggles obtaining more billboards, though Annie's dream of having these billboards Canada-wide is not over; Annie feels this will happen one day. Until then, the organization has created pop-up, free-standing banners. These banners were designed by DBDesigns and are amazing and powerful.

With the release of these banners there is now a "memory banner" and "survivor banner". The memory banner has pictures of individuals lost to suicide and also includes messages from their loved ones. The survivor banner is very powerful and exhibits the stories of those who survived suicide, explaining their struggles and endurance. Both banners will be on display throughout the Ottawa Valley and at Breaking The Silence and other mental health focussed events. Annie feels that the touching banners will send a strong message of support and provide hope to those affected by suicide.

On the wheels of Clara's Big Ride, individuals, organizations, businesses and families have come together to create Pedal Forward!, Renfrew County's Mental Health Coalition and Breaking the Silence is one of many organizations in this collective. As opposed to creating one large event to celebrate Mental Health Week 2015, Pedal Forward's Working Group has built a platform to brand activities and events with "Pedal Forward! recognition, indicating that the event promotes mental health and well-being. Pedal Forward! welcomes groups that would like to help reduce the stigma and raise mental health awareness to promote their events County-wide via Pedal Forward! recognition branding and the Pedal Forward! web page, an extension of The Physical Activity Network – Renfrew County (PAN-RC). For more information visit <http://www.physicalactivitynetwork.ca/pedal-forward> or email pedalforward@phoenixctr.com. For more information on Breaking the Silence, or to volunteer call 613-602-1652 or email breakingthesilence@hotmail.ca, you can also follow us on twitter @BtSPembroke or Facebook www.facebook.com/breakingthesilencepembroke

Please remember to Speak UP and Reach OUT, you are never alone.

24hr crisis line 866-966-0991

Upcoming Events – Mental Health Week May 3-9th various events happening throughout Renfrew County

Bake Sale March 28th 10am Pembroke Mall

2nd Annual End the Silence concert in conjunction with Waterfront Live June 19th

4th Annual Suicide Awareness Walk /Motorcycle Ride June 20th

-suicide is one of the leading causes of death in Canada

- is the 2nd leading cause of death among youth and young adults

-90% of suicides are caused by a treatable and/or temporary mental illness

-every 40 seconds someone dies by suicide every 41 seconds someone is left to make sense of it

-In the next 985 minutes 1478 people will take their own lives. In the blink of an eye 8868 families and friends will survive them and be profoundly affected.

-as of **March 9th**, 2015 the valley has **5** suicides that we are aware.

Tid bit from mental health commission of Canada

Health Canada reports that 13.4% of Canadians over 15 years of age have thought seriously about suicide in their lifetime.

Between 3,500-4,000 Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life die by suicide each year.