



SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS TASK GROUP MARCH 11, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was held via Zoom videoconference. Olga Viano called the meeting to order at 1:40pm.

IN ATTENDANCE

Dan Martin / Village of New Lenox, Olga Viano / New Lenox Community Park District, Gloria Bodnar / New Lenox Resident, Neesha Stringfellow / Will-Grundy R.O.S.C., Marie Kress / The Mental Wellness Center of Manhattan, Bill Karmia / Will County Health Department, Natalie Alfano / Thousand Branches Wellness, Patrice Martin / Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care - Grief Support Program, Marie Goulet / New Lenox School District #122, Michelle DeMato / Will County Health Department, Michelle Knierim / Uniquely You Behavioral Health, Joan Stefka / Will County Health Department, Ariel Ruttenberg / New Lenox Police Department, Jen Vujosevic / Lincoln-Way Community High School District #210, Allison Thomas / Rosecrance Health Network, Michelle Augoustatos / Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital, and Marianne Bithos / NAMI South Suburbs of Chicago.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes from the November 12, 2024 Task Group Meeting, which had been disseminated via email to Task Group members, were discussed. Marie Kress made a motion to approve the minutes, and it was seconded by Gloria Bodnar. After no further discussion, the motion carried and the minutes were approved. **Olga noted that there was no task group meeting in January, 2025.*

OLD BUSINESS

“safeTALK”

This class was held from 8:30am to 12:30pm on Monday, November 18, 2024 in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall. This class was taught by Sertoma Star Services. Thirty-four people registered via Eventbrite and approximately 20 attended.

VA S.A.V.E. Training

This class was held via Zoom videoconference from 7:00pm to 8:00pm on Tuesday, December 10, 2024. Michelle Augoustatos, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital provided the presentation. Seventy-eight people registered via Eventbrite and approximately 50 attended.

INTRODUCTIONS

Everyone took a moment to introduce themselves, including which organization they are affiliated with.

NEW BUSINESS

“The Grief Experience – How to Cope *or* The Grief Experience – How to Support Someone Who Is Grieving”

Patrice Martin, Director of Grief Support, Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care, has offered to do one or both of these presentations. Both of these presentations can be done in person or via Zoom. Patrice, who was in attendance, provided a brief overview on her two programs and reiterated that she is willing to do both presentations (most likely on separate evenings). Patrice advised that she would like to do both presentations, which was the consensus of the group as well. It was noted that these presentations pertain to those who lost a loved one to any manner of death. Dan Martin noted that grief support programs are hard to come by and thanked Patrice for these offerings. Dan will work with Patrice on getting at least one of these programs scheduled.

“Mental Health 101: Tips and Tricks for a Healthy Mind”

This presentation will be held from 6:00pm to 7:30pm on Thursday, March 20, 2025, in the Council Chambers (upper level) at the New Lenox Village Hall. *There was a conflict with the calendar in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall due to the local election.* The presentation will be given by Marie Goulet, NLSO #122.

“Question, Persuade, Refer” (QPR)

This class will be held from 7:00pm to 8:30pm on Thursday, April 3, 2025, via Zoom Videoconference. *There was a conflict with the calendar in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall due to the local election.* This class will be taught by Sertoma Star Services.

“RELAX: 5 Tips to Master Anxiety”

This presentation will be given from 7:00pm to 8:00pm on Thursday, April 10, 2025, in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall. Dr. Mike Mecozzi will be the presenter.

“Mental Health First Aid” (MHFA) – Adult Version

This class will be held from 8:30am to 4:30pm on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall. This class will be taught by Sertoma Star Services.

“Applied Suicide Intervention Skills” (ASIST)

This class will be held from 8:30am to 4:30pm on Wednesday, June 18, 2025 and Thursday, June 19, 2025, in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall. **MUST ATTEND BOTH DAYS.** This class will be taught by Sertoma Star Services.

“Out of Darkness Walk” (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention)

Marie Kress led our team last year (September 28, 2024) at the Kankakee County Walk, which was held at Riverside Healthcare in Bourbonnais, IL. No date is available for 2025 at this time, but it will likely be around the same time (September). Who is interested in being on Marie’s team this year?

“A Pathway to Hope and Healing”

World Suicide Prevention Week is September 7-13th this year. World Suicide Prevention Day is September 10th. “A Pathway to Hope and Healing” is typically held around this time of year in support of this campaign. Dan and Olga explained what this event has included in year’s past. Some of the things mentioned were breakout sessions, food / refreshments, speakers – keynote, panel, both. The discussion included the need to choose a venue, date, time and format. Another item that was discussed was target audience – community at large or behavioral health professionals or both. Also, should there be a specific “theme” for this year’s event? Following the discussion, it was decided that a Planning Team would be formed during the May, 2025 Task Group Meeting to move this event forward.

“Mental Health First Aid” (MHFA) – Youth Version

This class will be held from 8:30am to 4:00pm on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall. This class will be taught by Sertoma Star Services.

Dr. Mike Mecozzi (NEW) Presentation

This presentation will be given from 7:00pm to 8:00pm (*tentatively*) on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall.

“safeTALK”

This class will be held from 9:00am to 1:00pm on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, in the Community Room at the New Lenox Village Hall. This class will be taught by Sertoma Star Services.

GOOD OF THE ORDER / ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

Dan Martin / Village of New Lenox – At various points during the meeting, Dan thanked everyone for their contributions (and / or their respective organizations).

Dan explained how Eventbrite registrations are done. Dan advised that typically, for all of our FREE events, there is an approximate 30-35% “no show” rate. Dan explained that this has occurred across all the task groups throughout the years probably because there is no monetary loss if people don’t show up.

Dan encouraged those in attendance to consider doing a presentation (themselves or colleagues) in 2025.

Dan advised that all the Safe Community Coalition Meeting Minutes and Agendas can be found at the Village of New Lenox web site www.newlenox.net. All of the New Lenox Safe Community Coalition Task Group Meeting Minutes and Agendas can be found there as well. At the home page, click on Agendas and Minutes.

Dan encouraged everyone to attend the programs that are put on by our Coalition, especially this particular task group. Also, sharing the information (marketing) is extremely helpful.

William (Bill) Karmia / Will County Health Department announced his retirement at the end of this month. Bill thanked everyone for allowing him to participate in this group and thanked everyone for the work that they do. Dan congratulated Bill on his upcoming retirement and everyone wished him well.

Neesha Stringfellow / Will-Grundy R.O.S.C. stated that she is willing to volunteer to speak, perhaps at “A Pathway to Hope and Healing.” Neesha thanked those that attended her last meeting. Neesha asked everyone to mark their calendars for the next meeting, which will be on March 25th. This meeting will be “virtual” and everyone in attendance is welcome to speak and / or share information during the meeting.

Neesha also volunteered to help with flyers for events.

Patrice Martin / Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care - Grief Support Program, advised that they are starting a NEW Caregiver Support Group for those that care for people that have a serious / advanced illness.

Their Kids Camp will be June 30th. This will be for kids ages 7-13 that have had a death in the family. Patrice will bring literature on these programs to the March 26th Coalition Meeting.

Michelle Knierim / Uniquely You Behavioral Health asked if everyone could put their social media information in the chat box to provide an opportunity for everyone to follow and share information.

Uniquely You Behavioral Health

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Uniquelyyoubh/>

Instagram https://www.instagram.com/uniquely_you_behavioral_health/

The Mental Wellness Center for Manhattan – Marie Kress marie@mwcm.org

Dan Martin advised to follow the New Lenox Safe Community Coalition Facebook Page and he (the page) will follow back. Dan thanked Michelle for her suggestion.

Joan Stefka / Will County Health Department advised that she works with maternal health and the Will County Health Department has a harm reduction kit for pregnant women. Feel free to send Joan and email for additional information jstefka@willcountyhealth.org

NEXT COALITION MEETING

The next New Lenox Safe Community Coalition meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 26, 2025 / 10:30am, at Gatto's Italian Restaurant in New Lenox. A FREE luncheon will immediately follow the meeting. THIS WILL BE DAN MARTIN'S LAST MEETING AND HE WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE IF EVERYONE WOULD ATTEND.

NEXT TASK GROUP MEETING

The next meeting of the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Task Group will be **Tuesday, May 13, 2025 / 1:30pm** via Zoom videoconference.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:20pm

Suicide Prevention and Awareness Task Group

“To reduce deaths and injuries related to suicide, through the development of educational programs, initiatives and strategies that address factors which lead to the attempt or completion of suicide.”