

I'd stay up nights, crying"

Story by staff writer *Mike Latona* • Illustration by *Amy Sundstrom*

his feelings about a breakup with a girlfriend and a betrayal by a close friend.

"If I had a really bad day, I could give her a call and we could talk it out," Tom said.

Also helping him through his depression, Tom said, was the availability of another close friend.

"Almost every weekend I'd spend the night at my friend's house and we'd talk until four in the morning," Tom said.

At the same time, McMahon noted that not everyone actually recognizes when they're depressed — or how deeply they're depressed. For these reasons, it's vital for family members and friends to reach out to someone who may show warning signs. McMahon also suggested alerting somebody close to that person, such as a teacher, school counselor or family member.

"Depending on what's happening in that kid's life, the behavior can slip from depression to suicide very quickly," she warned. "Somebody may say, 'This is a snotty little kid' instead of trying to find out what's going on."

Instead, McMahon advised, show compassion for somebody who may be frequently angry, sad or withdrawn.

"Listen and be non-judgmental," she suggested.

Tom said that he has already used these tactics — successfully — with some of his own friends.

"I won't jump in and say, 'Hey, you're depressed — talk to me.' I'll say, 'Want to talk?' I'll be friends and lend an open ear, and sometimes they'll break down and tell you their life story," Tom said.

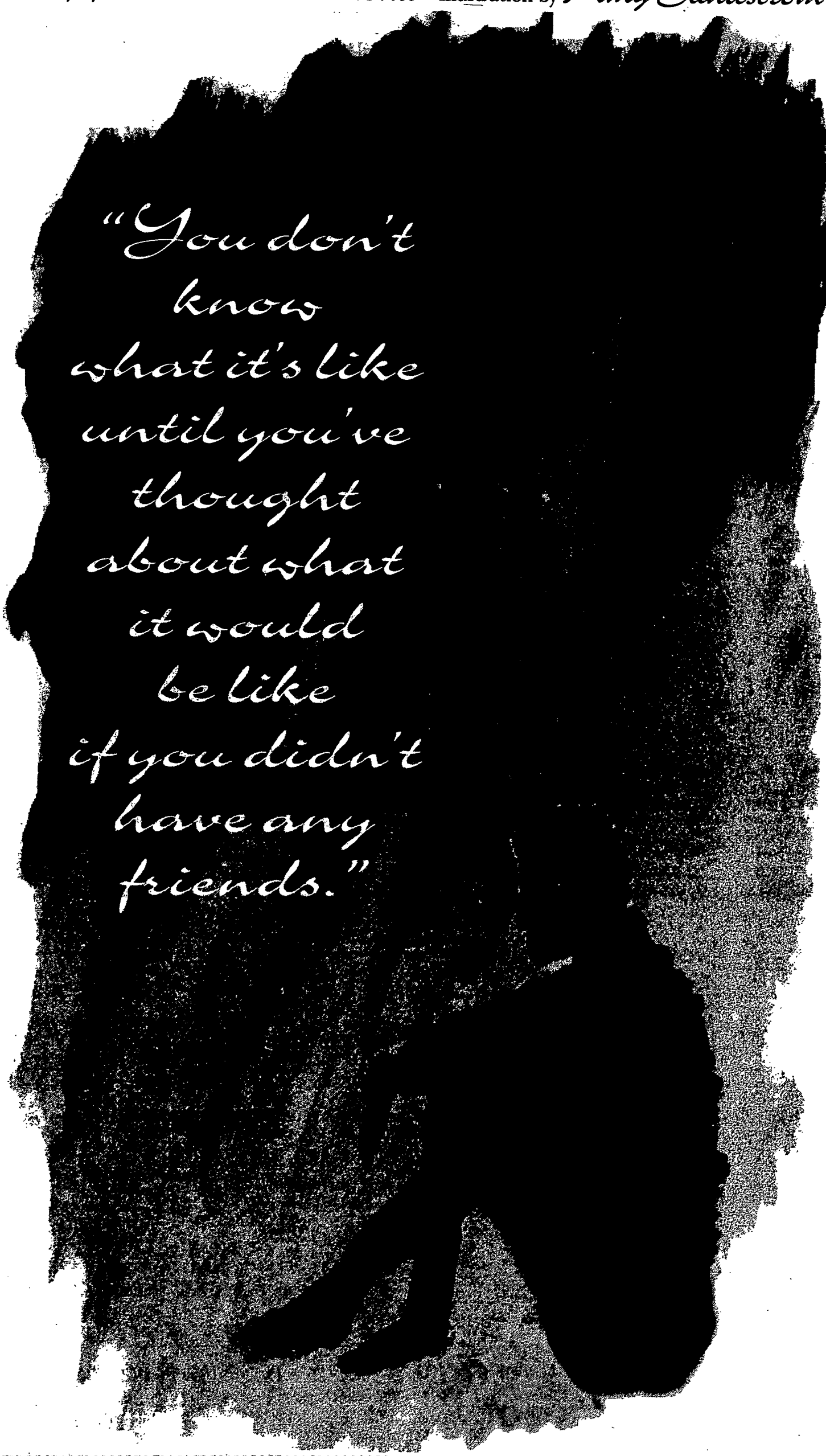
McMahon said that depression doesn't go away overnight, but any kind of step forward can only help.

"In crisis, kids feel they can't cope. But with help, there's light at the end of the tunnel," she said.

Jeremy believes he can now see that light. He said that he still does a great deal of soul-searching, but is basically at peace with himself and his brother's death.

"Life's life," he stated. "There are some very negative things, but I believe there is a heaven."

EDITORS' NOTE: The Center for Youth Services offers a 24-hour hotline for troubled teens. Call 716/271-7670.



"You don't know what it's like until you've thought about what it would be like if you didn't have any friends."

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