

# CROSSING THE LINE

parishioner at St. Louis Church in Pittsford. "I had a real tough time dealing with it, because I knew that if I stopped listening, the person might commit suicide. It was way over my head; I was running out of things to say."

"Ann" experienced a similar feeling when she learned that her brother had slashed his wrists, prompting a three-week stay in the hospital.

"I was only 14. I felt helpless," said Ann, now 16. She, also, asked that her true identity be withheld.

Ann, who attends a parish in Livingston County, said that her brother has made no known suicide attempts since that time. However, she is prepared to take action in case his suicidal tendencies resurface.

"I'd probably go right to my parents," she said. "Or I'd find someone I could trust, to fall back on."

It's also a good idea to discuss the situation with the person in crisis, Hodgman said.

"Talking about it with a potential victim makes it less likely to occur," Hodgman said. "If one is troubled by the thought (of suicide), the important thing is for that person to talk to somebody."

Pat Moore, also from St. Louis in Pittsford, agrees that people considering suicide need to get support, rather than be left alone.

"If you walk over and talk to that person, at least they know somebody's trying to reach them. Maybe that'll stop them, at least for a little while," said Pat, 15.

Pat's interest in the subject grew after a friend considered suicide while Pat was living in Connecticut last year. Pat added that the person was depressed because another friend had just killed himself.

"But then he went to the funeral and said he didn't want to end up like that," Pat recalled. "He kind of put two and two together."

Whether it be conversation with a friend or intervention from some other source, Hodgman stressed that any mention of suicide requires immediate attention.

"Don't deny it. If you do, the only person who feels better is you. Say, 'Let's get help,'" he said.

This kind of help may be needed more than ever. According to the New York State Department of Education, suicide has overtaken homicide as the second-largest killer of youths ages 15-24 in this country. Suicide in this age range has tripled in the last 40 years.

Catholics in this diocese are not immune to the statistics. Last year an eighth-grader at a suburban Rochester parish committed suicide, and the youth group to which he belonged has had discussions and a memorial service to help them cope with this loss.

Ann in Livingston County said she still has trouble understanding why anyone would want to end his or her problems through suicide. Yet through the experience with her brother, Ann is well aware that a threat of suicide can never be treated lightly.

"It seems to me that there's always another way, but (many) people have done it," Ann remarked.

"To a lot, that seems like the only answer," Carol agreed.

However, Carol's views changed greatly after surviving her experience at the train tracks.

"It changes your whole perspective," Carol said. "Your quality of life changes. I finally realized what I'd done to myself and everyone around me."

Since that time, Carol has begun college and also keeps busy staffing a summer camp. She admits to still having tough days, and seeks assistance from her counselor at the Center for Youth Services

"when I'm stressed out to the max," she said.

Overall, Carol is clear about one very important fact.

"I'm happy to be alive," she concluded.

## WARNING SIGNS

According to *Youth Yellow Pages*, a booklet issued by the Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau, these questions may help determine if someone may be suicidal:

- Has the person begun giving away prized possessions, doing poorly in school, talking about wanting to die, isolating himself/herself from family or friends, taking unnecessary risks, abusing drugs or alcohol, or suddenly becoming happy after being depressed for a long period of time?
- Has this person ever threatened or attempted suicide?
- Does this person really believe that he, she has a good reason to commit suicide?
- Does this person have a plan to commit suicide?
- Does this person have a way to put that plan into action right away?

## FOR IMMEDIATE HELP:

If you are considering suicide, or know of somebody who is, calling a hotline service for advice or professional intervention can help. Below are crisis hotline numbers in the 12 counties of the Diocese of Rochester. These are 24-hour numbers, unless otherwise indicated.

**CAYUGA:** Cayuga County Mental Health Center, 315/253-0341 or 315/253-2746.

**CHEMUNG:** Chemung County Crisis Team, 607/737-5369.

**MONROE/LIVINGSTON:** Lifeline, 716/275-5151. Center for Youth Services, 716/271-7670. Regional Action Phone, Inc., 716/343-1212 (collect calls accepted within 716 area code).

**ONTARIO:** Lifeline, 1/800/333-0542.

**SCHUYLER:** "SCHUYLINE," 800/348-0448.

**SENECA:** Seneca County Community Counseling Center, 315/539-5043.

**STEUBEN:** Department of Mental Health Crisis Number, 607/776-6577 (Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.). All other calls taken at 607/937-7800.

**TIOGA:** Tioga County Mental Health Crisis Department, 607/687-4000 (Owego area) or 800/548-4642 (Waverly area).

**TOMPKINS:** Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service, 607/272-1616. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. All other calls taken by Tioga County Sheriff's Department, 687-1010 (Owego area) or 607/565-2213 (Waverly area).

**WAYNE:** Community Counseling Center of Wayne County, 315/946-5722, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. All other calls taken by Lifeline, 1/800/333-0542.

**YATES:** County Suicide Prevention Program, 315/536-9979.

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