

# Eye On World & Local

## Suicide Awareness Month Begins In DelCo

By Jill Marabella  
Lion's Eye Staff Writer  
jdm5379@psu.edu

Purple and turquoise balloons were released into the night sky over Rose Tree Park Amphitheater by survivors, in memory of loved ones who lost their lives to suicide. This seventh annual candlelight memorial service for survivors of suicide, held on Wed. Sept. 10, was organized in part by the Delaware County Suicide Prevention and Awareness Task Force (DCSPA). The balloons, symbolizing the survivors' release of pain knowing their loved ones will never be forgotten, represent nationally adopted colors of suicide loss and prevention.

This year the candlelight vigil was accompanied by a greater recognition of the occurrence of such tragedies throughout the community. At a Delco. Council meeting on Aug. 19, DCSPA Task Force members Nikole Heilman and Ellen Chung accepted a resolution from Councilman Thomas McGarrigle setting aside Sept. 8 - 14, 2008 as Suicide Awareness Week in Delaware County.

"More people die from suicide than from homicide in the United States with 1,067 suicides recorded in Delaware County from 1990 to 2007," said McGarrigle in his opening remarks.

According to the latest records from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 32,000 suicides occurred in the United States in 2005. This is the equivalent of 89 suicides per day; one suicide every 16 minutes. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' statistics show that suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students.

Through awareness and education suicide can be prevented. Penn State Brandywine offers personal counseling services to all students who may be in need of someone to talk with. Stacey B. Shapiro, a Licensed

Certified Social Worker here at PSU Brandywine, provides a safe place to ask questions, find support and information, and be heard. To start the counseling process, call the Student Affairs office at 610.892.1270 to make an appointment, or email the Student Affairs office at bw-studentlife@psu.edu.

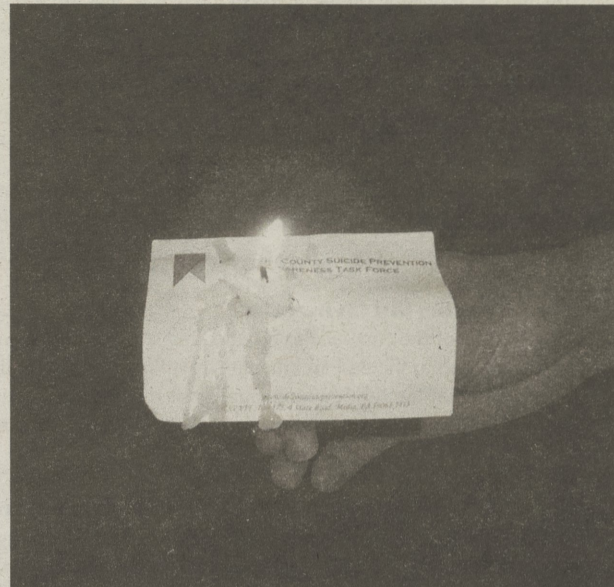
Stacy B. Shapiro has been a counselor at Penn State Brandywine for six years and she has taught human and family development classes on campus. In addition, she was a member of the DCSPA Task Force in 2007 and helped to plan Pennsylvania's First Annual Suicide Prevention Conference.

"I have seen counseling services enhance relationships, strengthen families, and help individuals create a healthier and happier life," says Shapiro.

Experts say that there are definite warning signs that indicated someone may be suicidal. However, they are often hard to recognize in someone that we are close to or in ourselves. Warning signs are not always present but it is imperative that they be address when evident.

**Warning signs include:**

- Hopelessness, worthlessness, helplessness, feeling a loss of control
- Threatening to harm oneself or complete suicide
- Having a definite plan for completing suicide
- Acquiring the means to complete suicide (e.g. getting a gun)
- Rehearsing or visiting a place to complete suicide
- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Changes in eating, sleeping, and personal care
- Apathy, lack of energy, inability to focus
- Talking or writing about death, drawing images of death



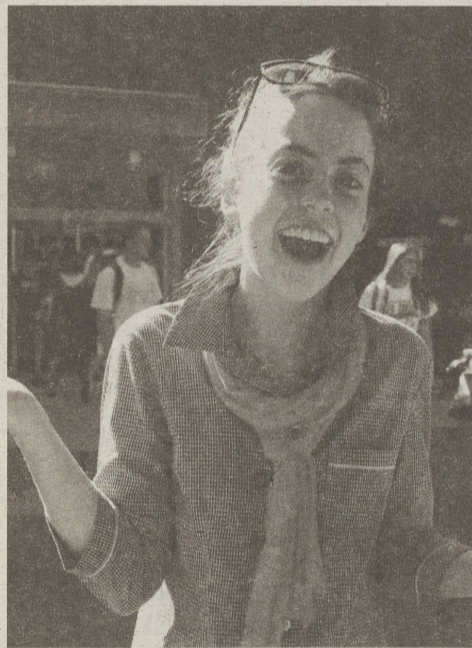
A candle is lit at the Rose Tree Park Memorial Service held by loved ones of people who have committed suicide. (photo by Jill Marabella)

- Withdrawing from social relationships or activities
- Losing interest in hobbies, work, school
- Giving away highly valued personal items or possessions
- Undergoing significant changes in mood and personality
- Engaging in reckless or dangerous behaviors

If you or someone you know is in emotional distress, you should seek help immediately! National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK www.suicideprevention-lifeline.org

## People Poll with Caitlyn Olszewski

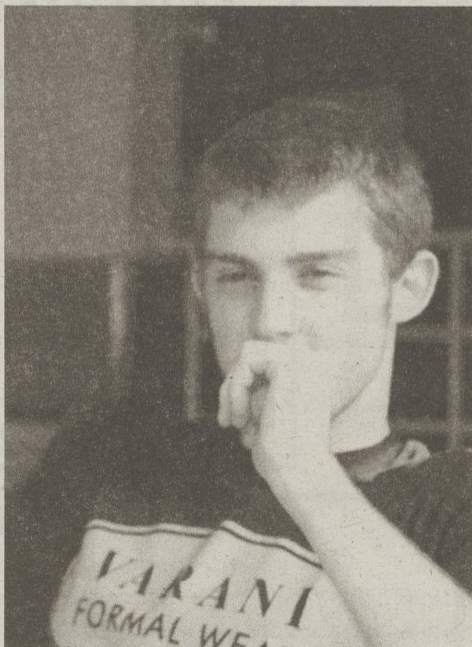
"What was your favorite summer flick?"



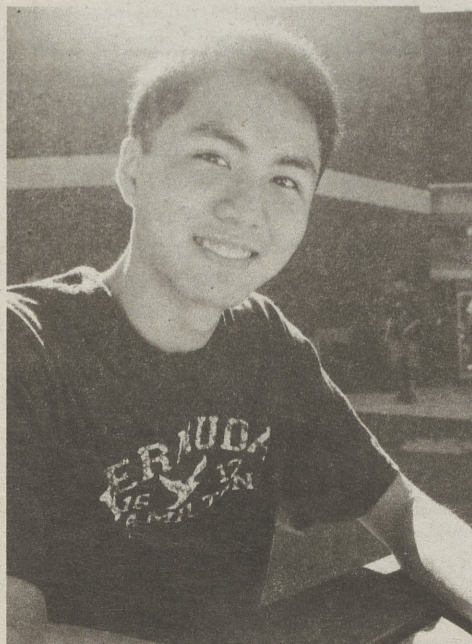
"Sex and the City" - Sara Neville, Education



"The Dark Knight" - Joanna Candelora, Biological Anthropology



"Mamma Mia made me shed a tear" - Geoff Harper, Film/Video



"Pineapple Express was AWESOME" - Dustin Cheung, Undecided



"The Dark Knight!" - P.J. Schatzberg, Communications