

Saving Lives and Bringing Hope to Tennessee Communities

Over the past year, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention experienced significant growth in Tennessee. Through focused efforts to build inclusive environments and connect with underserved communities, AFSP Tennessee is reaching more people than ever before. We continue to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage conversations about mental health and suicide prevention. Thanks to our fantastic volunteers, we are creating a culture that is smarter about mental health.



2,189

Education program attendees

+192% YOY



3,927

Out of the Darkness™ Walk Participants

+15% YOY



7,871

People reached at community tabling events

+46% YOY



940

Advocates who are fighting for local and federal policy change

+8% YOY



34

New research grants awarded internationally, made possible through chapter fundraising efforts



Educating Communities About Suicide Prevention

Tricia's Story

Tricia found AFSP when she signed up for an Out of the Darkness Walk to support a co-worker in the construction industry that had lost his son to suicide. At that walk she was so inspired to see the community and outpouring of support that she knew AFSP was an organization that she needed to be involved in. She decided to go back to Nashville and participate in the Nashville Walk the very next weekend. Tricia has been a voice for suicide prevention in the construction industry since 2022 when she joined a few like-minded individuals in her company to begin a mental health committee to focus on the challenges the industry faces. She continues to train construction industry professionals in suicide prevention through Talk Saves Lives and Mental Health First Aid.

Tricia chaired Tennessee's first Construction Hike for Hope in 2024 and hopes that the 2nd annual Hike, to be held in May 2025, will be an even bigger success, engaging more partners in the industry throughout Nashville and Middle Tennessee. This new signature event gives AFSP the opportunity to support the construction industry in a way that allows community building and leverages peer support that is so important in this work. AFSP is committed to seeing change in the statistics in the industry, which remain among the highest of any occupation in the country.

Tricia Mason

Volunteer, Board Member, Program Presenter, Construction Hike for Hope Chair

2024 Program Reach and Impact

2,189

Program Participants at
40 Community Presentations
+192% YOY

7,871

People Reached at
36 Community Events
+46% YOY

93%

of Talk Saves Lives participants
report gaining new knowledge and
learning at least one new concept

37% increase

in likelihood of reaching out
to crisis services after
attending L.E.T.S. Save Lives



Advocating for Public Policies in Suicide Prevention

Mark's Story

Mark attended his first Out of the Darkness Walk in 2016 after losing his wife to suicide in 2013. As his wife struggled, Mark had many unsatisfactory encounters with the mental health care system in Tennessee. This led him to volunteer with AFSP as an advocate in 2018, helping with State Capital Day, joining the AFSP Tennessee Board, and becoming Chair of the Public Policy Committee in 2021.

Tennessee is a difficult political environment in which to advocate at both the state and national levels for policies to protect the most vulnerable. Nevertheless, AFSP Tennessee public policy volunteers have persisted and achieved some successes. These include new state laws requiring 988 information to be printed on high school and college ID cards and imposing new statewide suicide data reporting requirements. Mark and his team have cultivated suicide prevention allies on both sides of the aisle in the Tennessee General Assembly and are collaborating with local college students, veterans groups, and other mental health public policy organizations to advocate for important gun safety legislation in Tennessee. In the 2025 Legislative Session, AFSP Tennessee sponsored and co-hosted a first ever suicide prevention educational panel of experts for members of the Tennessee General Assembly.

AFSP is determined to continue to advocate for and help implement gun safety laws, suicide prevention educational requirements, and mental health policies that will protect and lower the risk of suicide death for all Tennesseans.

Mark Patterson

Volunteer, Board Member, Public Policy Committee Chair, AFSP Advocacy Ambassador



AFSP's 2025-2026 Policy Priorities

The following four overarching pillars will guide AFSP's public policy and advocacy priorities for the next biennium.

1. Services and Care
2. Lethal Means Safety
3. Research and Infrastructure
4. Disproportionately Affected Communities and Populations

Within each of these four pillars, AFSP targets upstream prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery policies.

Learn more:

afsp.org/public-policy-priorities

Supporting Survivors of Suicide Loss

Paul's Story

On November 25, 2016, Paul lost his wife Alice to suicide. It was a loss no one could explain or foretell. All Paul's family knew was that Alice the mom, mother-in-law, friend, wife, sister, aunt, daughter and daughter-in-law was gone. In those days after Alice's passing, they cried. They lay sleepless. They wondered. They asked why. They searched. As a loss survivor, those initial days, weeks, months, even years seem foggy at times. They questioned themselves and asked what they could have done. They felt alone in their grief and sadness and didn't know where to turn for comfort and community. After internet searches, Paul found the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Paul has served as a volunteer with AFSP Tennessee since 2018. AFSP's Loss and Healing programs offer community, healing and give survivors a voice in their journey. Paul is currently the Tennessee coordinator of our Healing Conversations program. This is a peer-to-peer program where survivors of suicide loss can speak with other survivors who have suffered a similar loss. It's an opportunity for survivors who have lost a loved one to talk with a trained volunteer who has been there - who has walked the path. Paul calls the group professional listeners. Each of the volunteers has had a suicide loss in their lives. Their goal is to listen to a survivor of suicide loss and help them begin their healing journey. They offer resources, reference materials and ideas to continue to heal. They are here whether your loss is one month ago or 10 years ago.

Consider joining AFSP Tennessee for International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (Survivor Day) on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This event brings survivors together as a community to gather ideas and resources alongside other loss survivors and community partners focused on mental health and loss survivorship. As a survivor of suicide loss, you are seen. You are not alone.

Paul Augustyniak

Volunteer, Board Member, Healing Conversations Coordinator, National Loss and Healing Council



2024 Program Reach

5

International Survivors
of Suicide Loss Day
Events in Tennessee

104

International Survivors
of Suicide Loss Day
Attendees in 2024

18

Healing Conversations
to Support Survivors of
Suicide Loss in 2024

98%

of Survivor Day participants
report feeling supported,
connected, and hopeful

Building Community with Out of the Darkness Walks



Shannon's Story

Shannon lost her brother Matt to suicide in 2012. Resources in her small town were scarce for Suicide Loss survivors, so she found the Out of Darkness Walk in Nashville. At this event, she was overcome with the sense of community. The beads that participants wear identify their loss, and as strangers pass, they pass so many emotions between themselves with just a glance.

Being part of the Walk in 2012 led to being asked to be part of the original Board of Directors in 2013. AFSP has become a large and important part of Shannon's life, and she hopes to continue to be a part of the mission of saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide.

Shannon Geames

Volunteer, Board Member, Education Committee Co-Chair, Nashville Out of the Darkness Walk Co-Chair



2024 Out of the Darkness Walks

8

Community Walks in the Fall

3,927

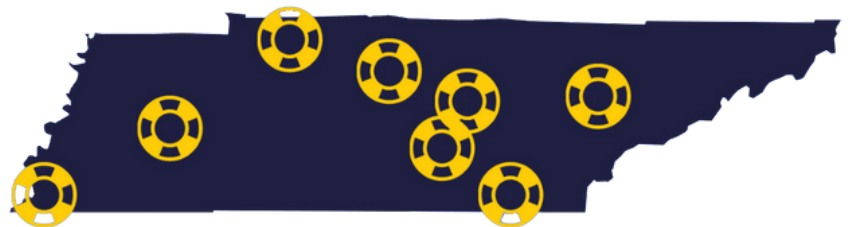
Walk Participants in attendance

5

Campus Walks in the Spring

\$270,371

Raised for suicide prevention



Funding Suicide Prevention Research

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention began as a research organization dedicated to finding the best ways to prevent suicide. Today, we are the largest private funder of suicide prevention research. Much of what is known about suicide comes from studies that AFSP has funded. Through our Innovation Research Grants, which support novel approaches to this important work, and our targeted, potentially high-impact Focus Research Grants, our studies help shape suicide prevention efforts around the world.

Research has shown that suicide can be prevented. By opening up new areas of inquiry, and funding studies across multiple disciplines at all levels of investigation, we can learn more about the causes of suicide, test promising treatments and interventions, and determine the best, most effective ways to save lives.

2024 Research Grants

The newest grants added to our research portfolio this year examine topics including:

- Identifying biological markers for suicide, including genetic markers for suicide in the brain that can be measured by a blood test
- Developing digital tools to help people waiting in emergency departments manage suicidal ideation and behavior
- Evaluating the impact of pharmacological treatments such as ketamine
- Learning from Black youth about their experiences related to suicide to inform culturally relevant interventions
- Studying neurotransmitters and other brain chemicals for treatment development
- Understanding and assessing how young peoples' suicidal thoughts may change across time
- Investigating the process of recovery for individuals after a suicide attempt
- Studying suicidal and other self-injurious behaviors that occur after brain injury
- Understanding how sleep and suicidal thoughts may be related to the menstrual cycle
- Investigating the relationship between interpersonal violence and suicidal thoughts and behaviors among women who are sexual assault survivors
- Exploring suicidal behavior in older people, especially among men with prostate cancer, as well as in relation to cognitive vulnerability and sense of connection
- Measuring the acceptability and impact of screening and safety planning on suicidal thoughts and action among youth living in Ethiopia
- Determining the value of clinician-facilitated grief support groups for suicide loss survivors by examining agency engagement, clinician training, and intervention effectiveness

Read in-depth information about this year's grants at annual2024.afsp.org/#Report-Research-Grants

