

The Watershed Declaration: intensifying efforts towards saving lives and bringing hope

by Scott MacLeod, The Sophie Fund

Community mental health stakeholders representing 18 organizations declared suicide a “serious public health concern” and pledged to intensify suicide prevention efforts in Ithaca and Tompkins County.

The call to action, known as The Watershed Declaration, was adopted on April 17th, by acclamation at the close of a meeting of leaders from Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca, non-profit organizations, and the campuses of Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College.

vigilance, and the willingness of all parts of society to commit to this effort.”

Addressing the gathering at The Watershed in Ithaca, Garra Lloyd-Lester, associate director of the [Suicide Prevention Center New York](#), announced plans to convene a “key stakeholders” meeting in June with the aim of establishing a suicide prevention coalition in Tompkins County.

Lloyd-Lester explained that suicide is increasingly seen as a public health problem rather than just an issue to be handled by a person and their therapist.

“Operationally, that means we can all play a role in helping individuals who might be struggling with thoughts of suicide, to help keep them safe,” said Lloyd-Lester. “...the mantra that the state talks about: suicide prevention is everybody’s business.”

Sharon MacDougall, Deputy Commissioner of [Mental Health Services](#) in Tompkins County, welcomed the state’s initiative. “Suicide prevention efforts in Tompkins County are strong and need collaboration among all our agencies, providers, and groups like [The Sophie Fund](#),” she said. “A Suicide Prevention Coalition will help bring these efforts together in close collaboration—providing a unified and passionate Tompkins County voice advocating zero suicides in our county.”



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The Watershed Declaration
*“We the assembled mental health stakeholders of the greater Ithaca community and Tompkins County recognize suicide as a serious public health concern.
Today we renew our commitment to suicide prevention and pledge to intensify efforts toward saving lives and bringing hope to those struggling with suicide thoughts or affected by suicide loss.”*

Lee-Ellen Marvin, executive director of the [Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service](#) in Ithaca, praised the call to action. “I was excited and moved to see leaders from different parts of our social service community together in one room, thinking about and committing to suicide prevention,” she said. “There is indeed a public health crisis, and the way to prevent suicide is with awareness,



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\$10 Million Endowed Funds

\$4.9 Million Non-Endowed Funds

Fund Types (100 Funds)

6 Community Impact Funds

10 Field of Interest Funds

23 Designated Funds

61 Donor Advised Funds



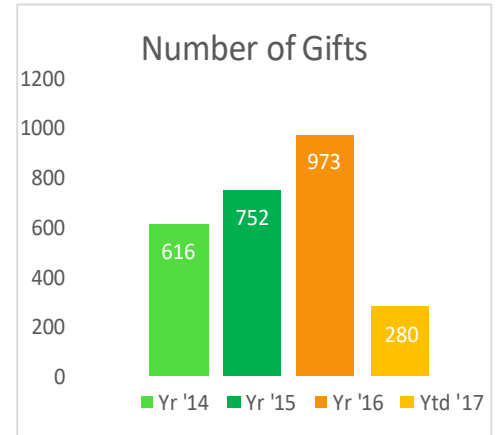
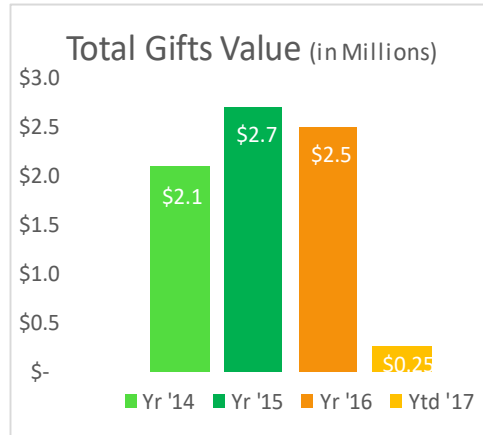
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