

For Information Contact:

Lydia Sermons-Ward, 703-907-8640

press@psych.org

Jessica Mikulski, 703-907-8562

jmikulski@psych.org**For Immediate Release:**

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APA Draws Attention to Mental Health during *Suicide Prevention Week 2005*

Arlington, Va. – The American Psychiatric Association (APA) joins with the mental health community to observe *Suicide Prevention Week*, Sept. 4 – 10, 2005. This observance, designed as an effort to get more people connected with information and medical help, is timely as the nation works through one of the most disastrous hurricane seasons in U.S. history. During this week, both the *Stop A Suicide, Today!* initiative and *World Suicide Prevention Day* will be observed on Sept. 10.

“The devastation that suicide can cause is a major concern to all health professionals. The personal tragedies that we are seeing in the Gulf coast region of the country can have a profound impact on a person’s sense of self. This kind of trauma may lead an individual to consider drastic measures as an alternative to the pain and loss they are feeling,” said James H. Scully Jr., M.D., CEO and medical director of the APA. “However, the more information and support that we can provide to individuals and families through educational tools, public awareness events and one-to-one outreach, the more lives we can save.”

Facts about suicide:

- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States with one suicide occurring on average every 17 minutes.
- Approximately 30,000 people die by suicide each year, more than by homicide or HIV/AIDS.
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds.
- The elderly make up 12.3 percent of the population, but comprise 17.5 percent of all suicides.
- Approximately 800,000 Americans attempt suicide each year.
- It is estimated that five million living Americans have attempted to kill themselves.
- An estimated 4.47 million Americans have been touched by the suicide of a friend, family member, or loved one.

Stop a Suicide, Today!, organized by Screening for Mental Health, Inc., teaches Americans how to recognize the warning signs of suicide in their family, friends and co-workers, and how to respond to suicide-related emergencies. Public information tools can found on the program’s Web site, www.stopasuicide.org.

“The tragedy of suicide is that it is a fatal, irreversible response to a reversible condition, usually depression, which can be treated,” said Douglas G. Jacobs, M.D., founder and executive director of Screening for Mental Health. “*Stop a Suicide, Today!* is aimed at empowering significant others to respond to a suicidal crisis and get their loved ones the help they need.”

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World Suicide Prevention Day, organized by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), focuses on encouraging the public, communities, societies, individuals, professionals and volunteers to conduct activities on the day to promote and demonstrate joint responsibility for saving lives that would otherwise be lost to suicide.

For more information on suicide in adolescents, review APA's "Let's Talk Facts" fact sheet on "Teen Suicide" at <http://www.healthyminds.org/multimedia/teensuicide.pdf>. For additional information about suicide and the impact of mental illnesses, please visit APA's consumer Web site www.healthyminds.org, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at www.afsp.org, the American Association of Suicidology at www.suicidology.org, or the Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA) at www.spanusa.org.

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 37,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Healthy Minds. Healthy Lives. Care that works to get your mind healthy again so you can lead a healthy life. Visit APA at www.psych.org and www.healthyminds.org.

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