



FAMILIES RENEWED, INC.

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## WHO IS THE GUY WITH PURPLE AND TEAL HAIR?



More than half of teens and young adults ages 10 - 24 engage in self harm on a regular and continuing basis. The good news is that we can use the same tools to prevent self harm as will prevent suicide. In addition, we can deploy these tools earlier using a comprehensive approach that will not only reduce the incidence of self harm and suicide, but can also prevent the trauma and suffering that leads to the mental health problems that are at the heart of the problem of teen suicide and self harm.

**I wanted to generate a conversation about these better ways to prevent suicide and self harm and give my students a fun way to participate,** so I created Bruce's Challenge on TikTok in November, 2021. The challenge

would end with my hair getting colored by a student on my bus any color or combination of colors my social media followers chose. In early May, 2022 we completed the challenge across all of the different social media platforms. While rainbow was a very popular combination of colors, my followers on social media ultimately chose the colors associated with suicide prevention, purple and teal.

On Friday, May 6, 2022 one of the students on my bus colored my hair purple and teal at Hair Mechanix in Delta, PA. While the color in my hair was supposed to be temporary, it

has generated a tremendous amount of conversation. So much so that I was inspired to leave it that way until we can implement LifeBST, an evidence based solution that addresses the root cause of suicide and self harm. The research also shows that it lowers school violence and drug and alcohol abuse as well.

LifeBST is an ambitious project and we cannot do it alone. We are currently working with, and have the support of, education professionals, licensed therapists, and local mental health systems to produce a comprehensive solution that is effective and predictable and can be rolled out in an easy and cost effective manner.

**We also need your help.** Please help alleviate suffering and prevent suicide and self harm through your generous donation today.

In addition to my work here as CEO for Families Renewed, I also drive a school bus part time to cover my living expenses. It is a perfect part time job because it gives me both daytime and nighttime hours to do my full time work at Families Renewed while giving me time to make a difference in the lives of the kids who ride my bus. To be honest, when I first started driving, I never dreamed that I would be as passionate about my kids as I have become. But the truth is that to me, I am simply a dad who is driving a big yellow station wagon taking my kids to school.

*“Awareness of the problem is good, but at some point we need to act, and the time for action is now.”*

Around the Thanksgiving holiday in 2021, I realized people have been talking for years about the tragedy of teen suicide and that we need to do something to reduce the incidence of teen suicide. But, the only thing we are doing about it is the same thing we have been doing for decades. We try to prevent bullying, we try to bring awareness to the problem, and we try to help those who are thinking about suicide by getting them to therapy or putting them on medications, or both. Sadly, those actions have not been effective. In fact, there has been a general increase in teen suicide overall. **Awareness of the problem is good, but at some point we need to act, and the time for action is now.**

In addition, there is an even bigger problem that is loosely related to teen suicide, but is much more prevalent and more insidious. That problem is the problem of self harm.

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## ALLISON

Allison contacted us because she was facing the prospect of being homeless. She was working part time while her husband was just starting a new job after being laid off two months prior. While they had some money in the bank, it was not enough to cover the rent, water, electricity, and gas.

We determined that she could afford to pay the rent and the electricity, but could not afford to pay the gas and the water bills for the month. In the financial plan we created, she would pay her rent and electricity for the month and we would pay her water and gas. The following month, she would have the income to pay everything and would put a portion of her disposable income in a savings account so she could start building an emergency fund. In addition, they both would also be able to survive the summer months when Allison would be furloughed and relying on unemployment compensation.

### *OFTEN OUR PROGRAMS OVERLAP*

During our time together, Allison confided in me that she suffers from Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), including thoughts of suicide and self harm. Her mental health issues stem from using maladaptive coping mechanisms for childhood trauma. This is at the heart of the majority of people suffering with thoughts of suicide and self harm. She also confided that the prospect of being homeless was making her BPD episodes much worse and more frequent. She said her BPD often caused tension in her relationship with her husband and that he struggles to support her when she is having her episodes. She asked if I would spend some time with her and her husband to help him understand her struggles and to give him the tools he needs to effectively support her. We all met together with positive results and we continue to follow their progress.

## PENNSYLVANIA'S UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION PROGRAM

There are many workers who rely on unemployment compensation to fill the gap when they are furloughed during the winter months, or the summer months, or both.

Melanie, who is furloughed every summer, sent me the image below that shows what it took to be able to get the help she needed because of problems with Pennsylvania's unemployment compensation problems.

As the image shows, Melanie had to repeatedly dial the phone number for help 702 times before getting past the initial busy signal. She then waited on the phone for nearly three hours to be connected to someone who could resolve her problem. While it only took a couple of minutes to resolve her problem it is still likely to be two or three weeks before she is able to collect her insurance benefits.

This situation increases the burden on families often creating a situation where they must choose between paying rent and utilities, and buying food.

In most rental contracts, the failure to pay utilities is a breach of contract. So renters can be evicted because of a failure to pay the rent or utilities. This often results in homelessness. The failures of the Pennsylvania

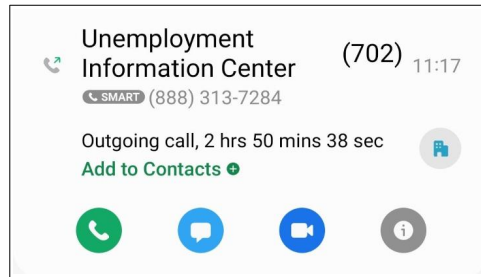
Unemployment Compensation program puts an additional and unnecessary strain on families and subsequently on organizations like Families Renewed who fill that gap.

## HUNTER'S EXTRAORDINARY GIFT

After learning about the work Families Renewed does with teens and young adults suffering from self harm and suicidal ideation, Hunter, a high school student in York County, Pennsylvania, decided to act. Hunter wrote a check to Families Renewed in the amount of \$250.00. That amount of money is a sizable amount for anyone, but it is an extraordinary amount for a high school student. We asked Hunter if he knew someone suffering with self harm or suicidal ideation, and he said, "No." He just wanted to help. We were moved and inspired by Hunter's choice to help others instead of spending his money on more typical purchases.

### *PLEASE MATCH HUNTER'S GIFT*

To honor Hunter's generosity, we are asking you to make a matching donation. If you are donating by check, please write "Match Hunter's Gift" in the memo and mail it to the address below. If you wish to make your donation online you can go to: [matchhunter.familiesrenewed.org](http://matchhunter.familiesrenewed.org).



## YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS CRITICAL TO OUR SUCCESS

**Prayer Partners:** In general we need prayer warriors to pray for the children and families we help as well as for us individually and for the success for Families Renewed in general. To receive emails with specific prayer needs, please go to [www.familiesrenewed.org](http://www.familiesrenewed.org) and sign up as a prayer partner.

**Giving Partners:** We are funded solely by generous people like you. You can support our mission by sending gifts to our mailing address below, through our website at [www.familiesrenewed.org](http://www.familiesrenewed.org), or by texting the amount of your gift to 717-775-7008. You can track your giving history through our website at [www.familiesrenewed.org](http://www.familiesrenewed.org) as well.

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