



# OHIO'S VOICE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



**WHERE  
THERE'S HELP,  
THERE'S HOPE.**

# A MESSAGE FROM OSPF'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we continued our work through the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis, OSPF made strides to better support those who were struggling and the families of those we have lost. We've seen more people reach out for help than ever before, which means more people are understanding the risk of suicide and how to help others seek support.

OSPF is growing to meet the level of need, advocating on behalf of those who are most at-risk, and championing policy initiatives that will change our system of care for the better.

But the momentum we've gained doesn't change the reality that suicide rates are high and that this is an issue that requires everyone's participation in solving. There are still thousands of people who need care and are struggling to find it, whether because of barriers in access, stigma, or any number of factors that can prevent them from finding help.

We all must take the call to support one another through difficult times. We must have those difficult conversations. If we are going to prevent suicide – until not one life is lost – we must increase our collective awareness of these issues.

It is our hope and our goal that there will be a day when suicide is an issue of the past – a tragedy that was met with love, compassion, and support – so that no one must endure the extraordinary grief that follows a suicide again.

In this report, we outline the many ways OSPF is stepping up, and how together, we're creating lasting change for Ohioans. Thank you to our partners, coalition members, advocates, supporters, local communities, and most importantly, the families that we work with. This work is not possible without you!

Sincerely,

Tony Coder  
Executive Director

# TRANSITIONING TO 988

In July 2022, the new National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline '988' went live. When people call, text, or chat 988, they are connected to trained counselors who will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources.



# Addiction Helpline A LOT ON THE LINE

In partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, OSPF advocated for the transition to 988. Now that the line is operational, OSPF is advocating on behalf of Ohioans to secure and sustain long-term funding for this vital service. We held a press conference in November to call for continued support for 988, and continue to have one-on-one conversations with lawmakers to make sure the line remains accessible.

## 988 at a glance:

- In its first month calls to the Lifeline skyrocketed by 39% in Ohio, and texts increased by 603%
- 87% of Ohio's calls remained in-state before being pushed to a national center
- The line is averaging about 7,000 calls per month



*"I support 988 because I lost my dad Jerry Williams to suicide. I really believe that 988 would have been helpful for him in some of his darkest hours and may have saved his life."*

**- Sandy Williams, Loss Survivor**



# SERVICE MEMBERS

Suicide among veterans is at a crisis level. Though we've come a long way in learning how to recognize the signs and what to do to help, we must increase efforts to integrate suicide prevention practices within post-service culture, connect those in need to life-saving resources, and improve access to mental health care.



# VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION CONFERENCE

More than 230 veterans died by suicide in Ohio in 2021. To combat this loss, OSPF became a member of the **Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families**. As part of this effort, OSPF hosted the Veterans Suicide Prevention Conference, where more than 250 veterans and professionals received life-saving training and a greater understanding of the resources and support available throughout our state.



*Sebastian Junger, American war journalist, joins OSPF for its first Veterans Suicide Prevention Conference.*

## SPONSORED BY:



*“When I think of OSPF, I think of professionalism, hope, and care.”* – Danny Eakins, Ohio Veteran

# LIFE SIDE OHIO

BY YOUR SIDE.  
UNITED FOR LIFE.

MORE THAN HALF OF ALL  
SUICIDES IN OHIO ARE BY  
FIREARM.



SOURCE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



# A NEW APPROACH

During 2022, OSPF released the Life Side Ohio campaign – a unique partnership with gun shop owners, including Blackwing Shooting Center; Fin, Feather, Fur; L.E.P.D.; and Vance Outdoors, to promote safe storage and other firearm safety strategies with firearm owners. Our top priority is to listen to hunters, collectors, enthusiasts, instructors, and those who've had professional military and law enforcement training. We continue to ask all of them to share their insights and experience to help guide Life Side Ohio to impactfully reach more gun owners about suicide prevention.



“Life Side Ohio is reaping the benefits of being a historic campaign; one that breaks communication barriers, is steadfastly apolitical, and reaches firearms owners where they are instead of the other way around.”

**Scott Light**  
Life Side Ohio  
Campaign Manager







*Helping young people find their power,  
conquer difficult times, and get to  
**a better tomorrow.***



# YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

OSPF's youth suicide prevention programs – Be Present Ohio, Sources of Strength, and Kognito – work with children, teens, and young adults, as well as the teachers and parents in their lives, to provide training, peer-to-peer connection, and healthy coping skills to navigate life's challenges.

## 2022 at a Glance:

- Sources of Strength was implemented in 66 secondary and 91 elementary schools across Ohio. To support these programs, OSPF helped train 65 Elementary Coaches and 60 Secondary Trainers.
- Be Present Ohio developed a unique suicide prevention program called Be Present Ohio: the Online Experience – aka BPO:XP – that gamifies developmentally appropriate suicide prevention content for 7th – 12th graders. BPO:XP will be piloting in the Spring of 2023 and launching during the 2023-2024 school year.
- OSPF secured a statewide 5-year SAMHSA GLS Youth Suicide Prevention Grant to provide suicide prevention training, including Kognito, and resources for youth between the ages of 10-24, and those that serve them. There is also a special focus on reaching LGBTQ+ youth through this grant.

“The training our students and faculty received was amazing. [Sources of Strength] is already having a positive impact on our building and will continue to do so for many years to come.”

Michael Voynovich,  
M.Ed., Principal,  
Franklin High School



The background of the slide features a photograph of two individuals, likely of African descent, seen from the back. They are standing close together, and their hair is styled in natural, curly patterns. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent purple filter, which serves as a backdrop for the text.

# BREAKING STIGMA

One study showed that 63% of Black and African American people believe that a mental health condition is a sign of personal weakness. As a result, many report experiencing shame or reluctance to seeking help. This stigma leads to feelings of isolation and hopelessness, which can lead to suicide.

SOURCE WARD, WILTSHIRE, DETRY, AND BROWN (2013)



# LIFE IS BETTER WITH YOU HERE



Life is Better with You Here  
hosted by Dr. Chivonna Childs,  
Cleveland Clinic



Life Is Better With You Here (LIBWYH) is a campaign whose sole focus is to provide resources, support, and love for the Black community who suffer from mental health disorders or suicidal ideation – for those who feel the burden of racism, discrimination, gun violence, poverty, poor school systems, and the absence of adequate mental health resources and want to give up.

## 2022 at a Glance:

- Launched the *Life Is Better With You Here* Podcast
- Launched a monthly newsletter
- Expanded the available list of licensed Black counselors
- Collaborated with partners, including African American Male Wellness Agency, Capital University, and Black Girls Rising to reach thousands of new individuals across the state





# IN EVERY OHIO NEIGHBORHOOD

OSPF coalition leaders across the state are an invaluable asset in statewide efforts to reduce suicide. They concentrate a community's focus on prevention, encourage alliances, and create consistency in a community's approach to the root causes of suicide. Together, coalition members can support loss survivors, and inspire change in the world around them.

## 2022 at a Glance:

- Provided resources and support to 67 active coalitions across the state that cover one or more counties
- Launched an interactive map on the OSPF website to connect Ohioans to their local coalitions
- Created The Ohio Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Prevention and Promotion, which is an accessible and interactive resource to support and connect the broader prevention community across the state of Ohio and is coordinated through a partnership between OSPF, The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service, and the Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation.



## Shout Out: The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Logan and Champaign Counties

In March of 2019, a local survivor, Dana Fullerton, had lost her 12-year old grandson to suicide. Stricken with grief and heartache, but with a desire to honor her grandson and bring hope to their small rural communities, she brought the “Don’t Give Up” movement to Logan and Champaign Counties. It started with a small group hosting sign rallies at the local schools that year and grew quickly in numbers of those that wanted to support the cause.

In 2022, the coalition decided to host two sign rallies in May to bring awareness to Mental Health Month. Community members and local survivors gathered in the downtown areas of Bellefontaine and Urbana, Ohio to hold signs in an effort to inspire hope and encouragement to those walking or driving by.





# COMMUNITY

This work would not be possible without the dedication and support of families and loved ones who have been touched by suicide; who share their stories and break stigma so that others can find hope and healing.



# SPIKE THE STIGMA

Spike the Stigma: MENd the Mind is an annual fundraiser hosted by two suicide loss survivors, Katy Gamertsfelder and Bridget Readey, who lost their friend Alex Willhelm to suicide in 2021. In 2022, OSPF was honored to be a benefactor for the fundraiser alongside our partners at Mental Health America of Ohio and LOSS Community Services.

The event brings volleyball players from across the state together for a day-long tournament, as well as a raffle and silent auction. Local artists contributed pieces to the event, which were also auctioned. Katy and Bridget raised a total of \$30,000 for their cause and hope to continue the event for years to come.



“In two years, \$46,000 has been collectively raised and donated to local nonprofits. These benefactors have the ability to provide services that aid in promoting education and awareness about suicide prevention while providing support to individuals and families who have been impacted by a loss to suicide. This fundraiser is in memory of our dear friend and volleyball teammate, Alex.”

**Katy Gamertsfelder  
& Bridget Ready  
Loss Survivors**





**"Adult Prom"**  
hosted by Jenny  
Merritt in honor of  
her son,  
Aidian Thomas Smith



*When a suicide happens to one, it happens to all.*

**"Swings Against  
Suicide"**  
hosted by Willoughby  
South High School Girls  
Travel Softball Team



Communities impacted by loss come together through unique events to fight stigma and raise awareness about suicide risks and resources that can help.



**"Bryan Hamilton  
Memorial Jeep and  
Truck Show"**







## A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE REDS

*The Cincinnati Reds have seen firsthand the compassionate care given by OSPF to families who are coping with the loss of a loved one through suicide. It is inspiring to witness an organization so completely committed to walking alongside people during difficult times, bringing hope, help, and a path forward.*

– Karen Forgas, Reds Senior VP of Business Operations











# THE ART OF HEALING

In honor of Suicide Prevention Awareness month, OSPF, in partnership with White Castle, hosted the Art of Healing Benefit for Suicide Prevention. The focus of this event was to raise awareness around suicides in the Buckeye State and normalize talking about mental health. The evening showcased local artists, presented awards for those who stand out in their work of suicide prevention, a silent auction, and an address from Academy Award Winning Actress, Marlee Matlin, as well as suicide loss and attempt survivors.



33 FOREVER



# VOICES

## FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

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REAL TALK. REAL HONEST. REAL LIFE.



LISTEN TO THE  
PODCAST NOW!





# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- ▶ Ohio Prevention Professionals Association
- ▶ American Association of Suicidology (AAS)
- ▶ Better Health Partnership
- ▶ Center for Community Engagement
- ▶ Franklin County Suicide Prevention Coalition
- ▶ Frontline Freedom
- ▶ Ohio Department of Health's Child Injury Action Group
- ▶ Ohio Governor's Challenge Team
- ▶ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA)
- ▶ Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- ▶ Statewide 988 Planning Committee
- ▶ The Addicts Parents United (TAPU)

# BECOME AN OSPF MEMBER

In 2022, OSPF launched an annual membership program. Through education and training, membership allows suicide prevention advocates to get more deeply involved in the work we're doing statewide to save lives.



# MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



Scan this code using your  
mobile device or visit  
[OhioSPF.org/membership](https://OhioSPF.org/membership)

- Free registration for OSPF's Monthly Webinar Series with local and national leaders.
- One free, virtual VitalCog training for you or your organization.
- Free registration for an annual, virtual QPR training.
- Free or discounted registration for OSPF conferences.
- Free physical copies of OSPF's monthly one-page resource guides.
- Access to monthly newsletters and e-blasts.
- An OSPF Welcome Package, including OSPF merchandise and resources.

**\$25**

## STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

*For individuals enrolled in post-secondary education for an entire year. Students will need to provide a student email to be approved.*

**\$50**

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

*Offers benefits to a single individual for an entire year.*

**\$250**

## GROUP MEMBERSHIP

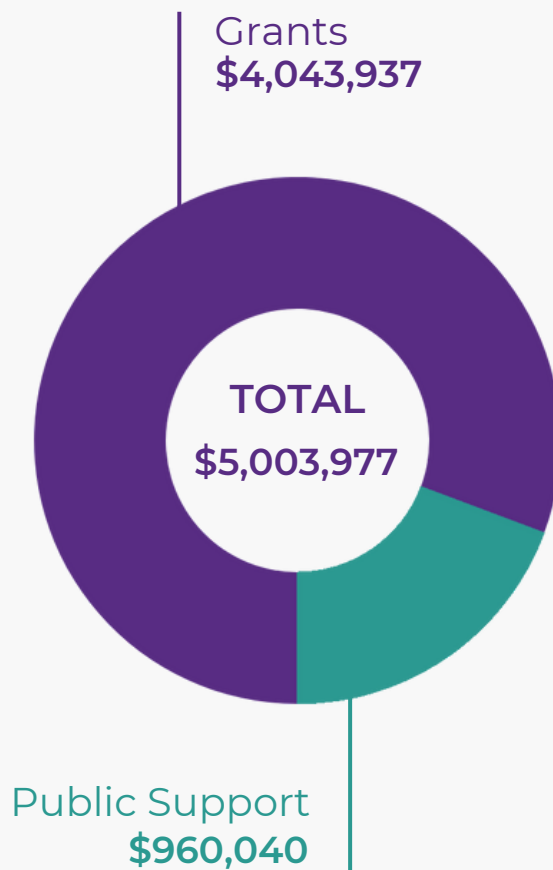
*Provides 5 seats to be distributed to other members of your company, agency, coalition, or volunteer group for an entire year.*

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

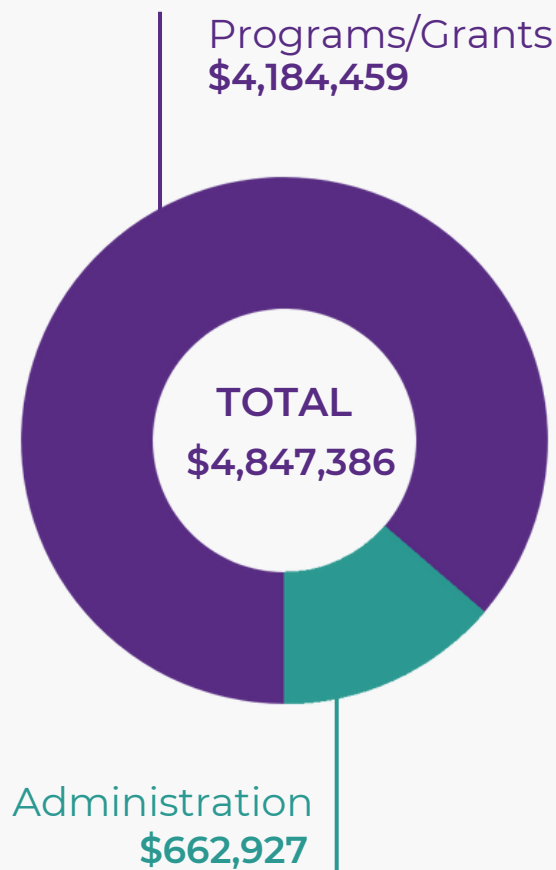
620

Donors  
supported  
life-saving  
prevention  
efforts

## Revenue



## Expenses



**DONATE TO OSPF**

[OhioSPF.org/donate](https://OhioSPF.org/donate)

# MISSION + VISION

The Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation is a non-profit organization that works tirelessly to prevent one of our most preventable causes of death: suicide. Our work includes reducing the stigma of suicide, promoting evidence-based prevention strategies, and raising awareness about suicide's relationship to mental illness and substance use disorders, and other factors that contribute to suicide.

Our community-based programs and best-practice resources are specifically designed to improve mental health across the state. Thanks to a combination of education, training, and support, we're helping all of Ohio's communities reduce the risk of suicide and lessen its effects on family, friends, and neighbors.

## 2022 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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