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MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF TEXAS' KELLER AWARDED PEACEMAKER AWARD

Merily H. Keller receives recognition for her work in suicide prevention and postvention

AUSTIN, TX (Thursday, December 17, 2009) – Merily H. Keller, a suicide prevention and postvention consultant for Mental Health America of Texas, received the Peacemaker Award from the Austin Dispute Resolution Center on Wednesday, December 16, 2009. The award is given to individuals who successfully resolved a conflict between individuals or groups in Travis County in the past year.

“Merily is very deserving of the Peacemaker Award,” said Lynn Lasky Clark LMSW, president and CEO of Mental Health America of Texas. “She has dedicated her life to resolving suicide issues through prevention and postvention.”

Keller received the award alongside Elizabeth Roebuck; they have both dedicated themselves to the suicide prevention field after losing children to suicide. Keller lost her youngest son to one of at least two teenage suicide clusters involving contagion in the past 10 years.

Keller works with Mental Health America of Texas through the Texas Suicide Prevention program. Both she and Roebuck served as facilitators of the Austin Suicide Prevention Coalition this past year. They worked with local groups to resolve conflicts and develop a suicide prevention and postvention protocol that worked for their communities.

“Austin is famous for many things – Barton Springs, being the Music Capital of Texas, Keeping Austin Weird, all good things; but also for having the highest rate of death by suicide of major Texas cities since 2001,” Keller said in her acceptance speech Wednesday. “So as a city, we need to work together to do suicide prevention and postvention.”

This year, Keller and others worked with State Representative Elliot Naishtat and State Senator Jane Nelson to pass Texas H.B. 1067 which will allow communities to gather timely suicide death data to help prevent suicide clusters and target prevention efforts.

Suicide prevention involves individuals listening for suicidal talk and then taking action to ask the question if someone is thinking about suicide. Postvention allows groups listening to each other after a death by suicide to help prevent more deaths.

For more information of suicide, prevention, and postvention visit www.texasuicideprevention.org

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