

# A Preliminary Evaluation of COLORADO'S YELLOW RIBBON SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM



## Background

The Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program® is an internationally recognized outreach program of the Light for Life Foundation International, headquartered in Westminster, Colorado. Dale and Dar Emme, founders of Light for Life, created Yellow Ribbon in 1994, following their son's death from suicide. Today, the program has chapters across the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Requests for suicide prevention resources and program information have reached the international office from 40 additional countries.

Yellow Ribbon provides 1) community-based suicide prevention education and gatekeeper training and 2) organizational support in the creation of suicide intervention and postvention plans. Its goal is to create a web of support within organizations and communities, in which adults and youth serve as links between individuals in crisis and local, trained professionals. A unique aspect of Yellow Ribbon's approach is its engagement of youth and survivors of suicide in its activities.

In the spring of 2002, Yellow Ribbon was awarded a grant from The Rose Foundation to fund an initial evaluation of its work in Colorado. OMNI Research and Training, Inc. was contracted to conduct the first phase of this assessment. The evaluation of Yellow Ribbon examined the following:

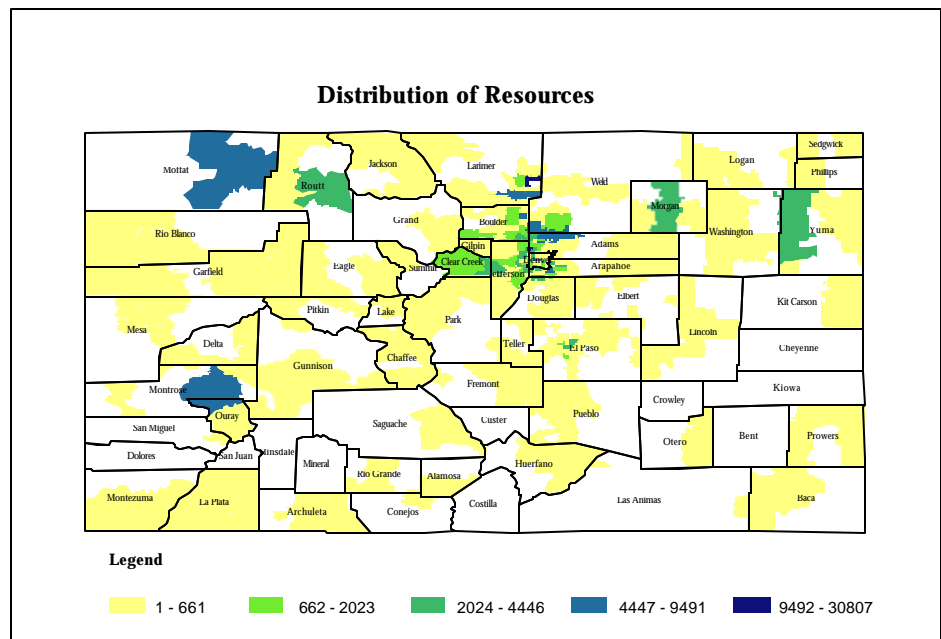
- ◆ How many Coloradans contact Yellow Ribbon for information and support?
- ◆ What areas of the state and how many individuals have participated in Yellow Ribbon trainings?
- ◆ How many suicide prevention resources have been distributed and to what areas of the state?
- ◆ How do the outreach efforts of Yellow Ribbon compare with suicide trends within Colorado?

## Yellow Ribbon's Activities in Colorado

Over 4,000 Coloradans contacted the Yellow Ribbon office for information and support, between 1994 and 2002. Collectively, contacts reached the office from over 400 different towns and cities in Colorado, representing each county within the state. At least 642 of these contacts were initiated in response to a suicide-related event (completion, attempt, contemplation).

During the period, Yellow Ribbon hosted 310 community events in 52 different towns and cities in Colorado. A total of 66,718 participants attended. In Denver alone, Yellow Ribbon reached 21,424 through these events.

Yellow Ribbon has distributed program information and suicide prevention resources



through community events and in response to contacts made with its office. Ask4Help® cards, a key component of the Yellow Ribbon program, were the most widely distributed resource. The map on the previous page shows the number of suicide prevention resources distributed by Yellow Ribbon in indicated zip code areas throughout the state. 250,000 cards, alone, were disseminated.

### Hotspots for Suicide in Colorado

According to the Centers for Disease Control, as of 2000, suicide represented the eighth leading cause of death among Coloradans overall and, among young people, suicide ranked second and third for different age groups. Based on data available from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Colorado experienced 6,825 suicide deaths between 1991 and 2001, averaging an annual age-adjusted rate of 16.2 per 100,000 residents. County-level data reveal that 36 of Colorado's 63 counties exceeded the statewide rate, with the majority located in the southern and western regions. Using CDPHE data, OMNI identified 18 counties of particular concern due to their suicide trends:

<b>Adams</b>	<b>El Paso</b>	<b>Mesa</b>
<b>Arapahoe</b>	<b>Fremont</b>	<b>Montezuma</b>
<b>Boulder</b>	<b>Garfield</b>	<b>Montrose</b>
<b>Chaffee</b>	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Pueblo</b>
<b>Delta</b>	<b>La Plata</b>	<b>Teller</b>
<b>Denver</b>	<b>Larimer</b>	<b>Weld</b>

The combination of relatively high incidences and rates of suicide (for both total and youth populations) in Mesa and Delta counties was a significant finding.

### Assessment of Yellow Ribbon's Reach within Colorado's Hotspots

<b>Strengths</b>	Yellow Ribbon has responded to contacts, distributed resources and provided training and other assistance heavily within the greater Denver area (including parts of Adams, Arapahoe and Jefferson).
	The program has established a number of contacts in Montrose, La Plata, Larimer, Weld, Boulder and El Paso.
	Yellow Ribbon was accessed as a resource for suicide-related events by residents of Delta, Chaffee, El Paso, Boulder, Larimer and Weld, as well as those within the greater Denver area.
	Through community events, Yellow Ribbon reached hundreds of residents in Chaffee, Garfield and Fremont.
	Even larger numbers took part in Yellow Ribbon events held in regions of El Paso, Boulder, Larimer and Weld.
<b>Limitations</b>	Yellow Ribbon distributed thousands of suicide prevention-related materials in Montrose and areas of El Paso, Boulder, Larimer and Weld.
	Among indicated areas, Mesa and Weld contained the largest regions untouched by Yellow Ribbon activities.
	Yellow Ribbon events had not reached the southeastern or southwestern areas, where the highest suicide rates in the state exist. Among the counties of particular concern, Yellow Ribbon had not held trainings in Montrose, Montezuma, La Plata, Teller, Pueblo or Mesa.
	Yellow Ribbon resources had not been distributed to a number of counties in the southern region. These counties were among those with the highest rates of suicide: Hinsdale, San Juan, Mineral, Dolores and Costilla.

### **For more information about the evaluation, please contact:**

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program®  
 P.O. Box 644 Westminster, CO 80036-0644 USA (303) 429-3530 Fax: (303) 426-4496 ask4help@yellowribbon.org