

Introduction

A tragedy befell our family when our daughter, Katrina “Kara” Tagget, died by suicide on September 20, 2008. In the aftermath of this tragedy, we established a scholarship in Katrina’s memory and spirit, the Katrina Tagget Fellowship at Michigan State University (MSU), and a foundation, the Katrina Tagget Memorial Foundation (KTMF), to support mental health education and suicide prevention.

It is incomprehensible surviving the loss of a loved one. But the loss of a child is especially tragic, for their death marks the end of the hopes and dreams we have for that child. We deal with our grief in many different ways, and there is no one way that is right for everyone. We are managing our grief of the loss of Katrina by involving ourselves with initiatives that help others and keep her memory alive. Our community service includes advocacy work on her behalf that allows us to give her a voice, a voice we didn’t hear when she was alive. We have learned that we can stop the shame silence and stigma of suicide and raise an understanding of mental illness so that other families do not have to survive the tragedy we have. We have found that when we talk about our own experiences, not only are we helping others, but we are helping ourselves heal. We will never completely recover from our loss of Katrina, but each day brings us acceptance of a future without her physical presence.

Summary of Events

During this past year, the following events have been held in Kara’s memory:

Ongoing – The Katrina Tagget Fellowship became fully endowed within one month of Katrina’s death. As of December 31, 2009, 171 gifts have been received which totaled \$52,984, and the value of the endowment has increased to \$61,737.

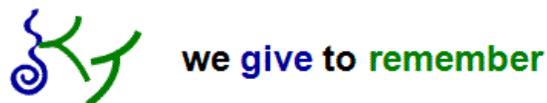
<http://spartanpartners.msu.edu/tagget/>

April, 2009 – The first Katrina Tagget Fellowship was awarded by the MSU Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) to MSU students Melissa Ghislain and Ginette Golembiewski. The first annual Katrina “Kara” Kookie Exchange was held to celebrate her birthday. Forty friends and family exchanged dozens of cookies and raised \$1,500 for KTMF.

<http://www.katrinatagget.org/Scholarship.htm>

May, 2009 – Katrina was awarded an honorary degree from Michigan State University. Katrina’s brother, Blake, accepted the degree at the graduation ceremony, which was attended by more than twenty-five friends and family of Katrina.

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July, 2009 – The Kara Tagget Open was hosted by the Howard Aging Hacker’s Association (HAHA), a men’s golf league at Waverly Golf Course, Marriottsville, MD. The first-time event was a sell-out with 132 golfers, over 25 volunteers and raising over \$18,000 for KTMF.

<http://www.KatrinaTagget.org/KaraTaggetOpen.htm>

September, 2009 – Kara’s family and friends gathered on September 20 to recognize the one-year anniversary of her death. A backpack for Active Minds “Send Silence Packing” program was created which is a college road show of 1,100 backpacks to represent the 1,100 students who die by suicide annually on college campuses.

<http://www.ActiveMinds.org>

November, 2009 – Twenty-five walkers for Team Katrina “Kara” walked the Out of the Darkness Walk in Towson, Maryland, raising \$10,031 in three weeks for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. The walks unite thousands of people with the common goal of preventing suicide and ending the stigma that surrounds depression and other mental illnesses. We were the top fund-raising team for the walk.

<http://www.OutOfTheDarkness.org/>

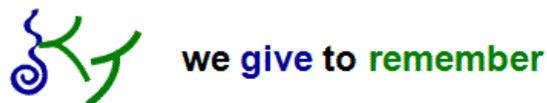
December, 2009 – For the Katrina Tagget “Your Life Matters” Suicide Prevention project, \$10,000 and 1,500 bookmarks were donated to MSU. This project is part of MSU’s overall initiative called FACES, Freshman Accessing Community and Embracing Survival. The goal of the FACES campaign is to address the number one issue impacting the campus, depression. Your Life Matters project is focused on increasing awareness of the warning signs of suicide and educating parents about suicide and depression.

Financial Summary

Financial Summary of KTMF (*amounts are approximated to the nearest dollar*)

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expense</u>
KTMF Donations	\$ 1,571	
Katrina “Kara” Kookie Exchange	\$ 1,560	
Kara Tagget Open	\$18,924	
Kara Tagget “Your Life Matters”		\$10,000
KTMF Expenses		\$ 2,338
	=====	=====
	\$22,055	\$12,338
Balance (<i>as of 12/31/2009</i>)	\$9,717	

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Our Sincere Thank you

In the past sixteen months, there have been many individuals and organizations who have supported our efforts to keep our daughter's memory alive. We thank all the friends, family, and strangers for their financial and emotional support they have given to us. While we would like to personally thank everyone in this letter, there are just too many names to list. Please know that we are grateful for your support and without which we would not have had the successes we have had this past year. We would like to give a special mention to the following individuals and organizations who gave of their time and financial support to achieve many successes this past year.

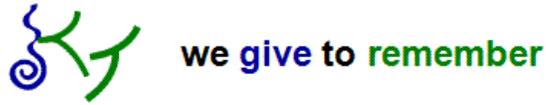
- **Mike Hudson, Ann Marie Lindley, and Valerie Nilson** of MSU for their extraordinary efforts to establish the Katrina Tagget Fellowship and the Katrina Tagget "Your Life Matters" Suicide Prevention project
- Katrina's uncle, **Steven Tedesco** of Greenwood Village, Colorado, and his family for their generous donation to the scholarship which allowed the scholarship to be fully endowed within one month of creation
- **Howard County Aging Hackers Association (HAHA)** of Howard County, Maryland, for organizing and holding the Kara Tagget Open, a memorial golf tournament which raised money for KTMF. The HAHA league organized a spectacular first year event that far surpassed our expectations
- **Amanda Bruce** from AFSP for speaking at the Kara Tagget Open and for supporting Team Katrina "Kara" for the Out of the Darkness Walk
<http://afsp.org>
- **Serafino Restaurant, Ellicott City, Maryland** for providing the dinner for the Kara Tagget Open at no cost to us, which was a tremendous financial savings for the event
<http://serafinosonline.com/>
- **Compassionate Friends and Survivor's of Suicide** for their loss support which we continue to rely upon.
<http://www.CompassionateFriends.org> and www.SurvivorsofSuicide.org

Upcoming Events***

- April 23, 2010 – MSU RCPD Awards Ceremony, East Lansing, MI
- May 1, 2010 – Katrina "Kara" Kookie Exchange, Ellicott City, MD
- June 26, 2010 – National Out of the Darkness Walk, Boston MA
- July 19, 2010 – Kara Tagget Open, Howard County, Maryland
- September 20, 2010 – The second year anniversary Katrina's death

*** *KTMF plans to apply the contributions raised towards programs in Howard County, Maryland that educate and support mental illness awareness and suicide prevention.*

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Conclusion

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young adults 18-24. Individuals who have family members who have died by suicide are at a 25 percent higher risk of dying by suicide. The leading cause of suicide is depression. Studies have shown that a genetic component to depression exists which can explain the higher incidence of depression and suicide among family members. Known as a “silent killer,” depression is often gone unnoticed until too late. The warning signs of risk of suicide can be overlooked especially in young adults where the symptoms can appear as typical teenage angst. We should not accept that suicide is the answer. Depression is a treatable illness which involves medication, therapy, and time. If you are suffering from depression or know someone who is, get help. It’s better to do something than to ignore the warning signs. Thank you for helping us to raise awareness of this silent killer and helping to stop the shame, silence, and stigma of suicide.

Peace & Love,
Sara, David & Blake Tagget

KatrinaTagget.org

Are you or someone you love at risk of suicide?

Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or contact a mental health professional if you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs:

- Threatening or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities—seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped—like there’s no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and society
- Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Having dramatic mood changes
- Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life

**If you or someone
you know is
in suicidal crisis,
call
1-800-273-TALK (8255).
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

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