

## 2016

## Fred Meservey Life and Leadership Awards

Recipients of this award are recognized for their outstanding leadership and for the impact of their contributions in improving the quality of life in New York State. Fred Meservey was the founding Director of the Suicide Prevention Center of New York. He is a suicide loss survivor whose visionary, collaborative and passionate approach was pivotal to moving forward suicide prevention in New York State. Fred's life affirming qualities and his lifelong commitment to suicide prevention make recipients of this award exemplary New Yorkers.

### **Dr. Rosa M. Gil, DSW**

*Founder/President/CEO, Comunilife, Inc.*



In her capacity as Founder and CEO of Comunilife, Dr. Gil tirelessly advocates for programs that meet the cultural and linguistic needs of at-risk Latina youth and their families, such as Life is Precious (LIP). She also initiated a public service campaign designed to bring attention to suicide among Latina Youth. Every year, 120 teens from Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens participate in LIP. All of the participants come from low-income families and most live in New York City's poorest communities. LIP's goal is to eliminate suicide by Latina adolescents by giving them tools that build their resistance and provide skills to succeed.

In 2011, Comunilife was chosen as one of the four GLS NYS Youth Suicide Prevention Centers, specifically targeting Latina youth. In 2014, through a competitive selection process, Comunilife was one of the 16 health care organizations that were selected to attend the inaugural Zero Suicide Academy. As a result, they have incorporated evidenced based practices to improve care and safety for those at risk of suicide.

Dr. Rosa Gil has had a distinguished career in the fields of health, social services and higher education and has published numerous articles on mental health, ethnicity, child welfare and gender issues. She is the co-author of the "Maria Paradox," the first authoritative book on self-esteem and Hispanic women. [Full Bio](#)

## **Perry D. Hoffman, Ph.D.**

*President/Co-founder National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder (NEA-BPD)*

Dr. Hoffman is a researcher with significant expertise in counseling people with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and their family members. Along with Dr. Alan Fruzzetti, she founded Family Connections and made it available worldwide – at no cost to families. This 12 week course provides education, skills training and support for families whose loved ones engage in high risk behavior. Family Connections is often the only way for family members to learn much needed DBT skills, and to do so in a supportive and compassionate environment.

Through Dr. Hoffman’s collaboration with OMH, NYS now has a competent and caring network of FC leaders. Most group leaders are family members who participated in a group and found it to be so helpful that they now volunteer to lead groups for other families. Even with this solid network in NYS, the waiting list for a FC group is usually long. In addition to FC, Dr. Hoffman is the president and cofounder of the National Education Alliance for BPD (NEA-BPD), has received several grants from NIMH with a focus on families, coordinated many conferences on BPD and suicidality, and has been recognized by NAMI. [Full Bio](#)



## **Excellence in Suicide Prevention Awards**

Honorees receiving the Excellence in Suicide Prevention award are nominated by their peers and chosen for their deep commitment and outstanding contribution to saving lives in their communities. Their work embodies our belief that “Suicide Prevention is Everyone’s Business.”

### **Shelby Davis**

Shelby is a member of the Essex County Suicide Prevention Coalition and always goes above and beyond to make the coalition thrive. She is an amazing person and works tirelessly to achieve our mission. She shows great willingness to complete any task and seeks out ways to improve our coalition. Her compassion and hard-work are immeasurable. I believe she should be nominated for an award due to her dedication, hard-work, and effort to make our coalition successful. — *Nominated by Erin L. Velsini*

## **TULIPS** – (Trainers United on Long Island for the Prevention of Suicide)

Brooke Yonick, Diane Sweet, Linda Sherlock-Reich – Linda, Brooke and Diane advocate for individuals who have suicidal feelings, family members of attempts survivors, family members of those who have lost someone to suicide, and for individuals with a mental illness. They are valued members of the Long Island Suicide Prevention Coalition. In addition to responding to postvention requests, Linda, Brooke and Diane regularly provide trainings for suicide prevention including safeTALK and ASIST. Diane created and maintains a group of social workers that serve youth regarding a multitude of issues including suicide and mental illness. — *Nominated by Phillip Schoppmann for the LI Coalition*

## **Rachel Handler**

Rachel has done so much for suicide prevention. Her dedication continues to have an impact through her professional role in mental health at Samaritan Hospital as well as in her volunteer work with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the Rensselaer County Suicide Prevention Task Force and Postvention Team. Rachel serves on the board of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and in January, assumed the role of Chair of the board. Rachel started the Rensselaer County Suicide Prevention Task Force and has been a constant presence and contributor to its success. Rachel led the task force to develop a Postvention team. She is extremely effective at this work because of her ability to wear multiple hats; board chair, volunteer, mental health professional, task force leader and most importantly – survivor of suicide loss. — *Nominated by Laura Marx*

## **Pastor Scott Lowmaster**

When faced with the statistics of suicide in his community, Pastor Scott realized there was a need to raise awareness of suicide and to do something to turn the tide. He founded the iMatter Foundation in 2007 to bring a message of hope to young people and to reverse the trend of self-mutilation, depression, and suicide which have been pervasive in our society. The iMatter vision is to create a culture of acceptance that uncovers value, discovers purpose, and reveals hope to a uniquely created generation. The iMatter Festival has become one of the premiere youth events in upstate New York. In addition to its mission to eradicate suicide and self-harm, iMatter will be launching a new campaign to combat the opioid crisis which is sweeping across our nation. Pastor Scott served as a speaker on World Suicide Awareness Day and was part of a discussion panel on Suicide Survivors Day. Pastor Scott has been working closely with law enforcement, county agencies, schools, industry, businesses and other groups to reduce the impact of suicide and make our community a better place to live. — *Nominated by Dr. Brian Cassetta*

## **NYC Office of School Health-Community School Mental Health Managers**

Ketsia Delarosa-Torres, Stephanie Goldstein, Brigid Nugent, Rebecca Scefonas and Rachel Wasserman – Ketsia, Stephanie, Brigid, Rebecca and Rachel rolled out “Making Educators

Partners in Suicide Prevention” to the staff of 130 community schools throughout the 5 boroughs. The Mental Health Managers were able to train 70% of these schools in a very short time, with 91 MEPs offered by the close of the 2015-2016 school year. While Suicide Prevention is frequently a professional development offering that educators can attend, this is the first time that the topic of suicide prevention was offered to the entire staff and faculty, not simply the guidance counselors or social workers in a school. The Mental Health Managers were only trained as trainers in December, making the 91 trainings they completed an exceptional feat in a mere 6 months. They have received positive feedback from the schools. — *Nominated by Marcie Bouchard*