

A welcome discussion

BY JOANNE LOWE AND, OTTAWA CITIZEN OCTOBER 24, 2011

Re: Mixed messages about suicide in the media, Oct. 21.

We'd like to applaud Kelly Egan for a thoughtful piece on the complexity of youth suicide.

The guidelines of the Canadian Psychiatric Association and the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention ask media to avoid glamorizing suicide so that it does not appear to be an attractive option to others. Young people under 24 are especially vulnerable to the influence of the mass media and, nowadays, its multiplied effect in cyberspace.

This balance can be difficult to achieve while also honouring the grief of a bereaved family and community. It's a good thing that members of media are discussing this issue and looking for the best approach.

As humans, we do search for simple answers which reassure us in the face of events like suicide which are unfamiliar to many, frightening and surrounded by stigma. We cannot ever know the full reason for a suicide that is completed, although in Jamie Hubleby's case, he expressed many of his thoughts and feelings online.

What we do know is that supporting the mental health of children and youth does offer them greater resilience, which can protect them to an extent as they go through the pains of adolescence and become adults. Mental health programs need to be readily available in the community and as natural as seeking other services.

Media coverage should always include where to get help. This includes the YSB's 24/7 Crisis Line for children, youth and families across Eastern Ontario (613-260-2360).

Our mental health walk-in clinic is also a safe place for youth to talk to someone before their feelings become overwhelming (www.ysb.ca/mentalhealth for details).

Joanne Lowe, Executive Director, Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa

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