



Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue #2
December 2021

TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

IN THIS ISSUE

Greetings from the President

Nhung Hendy

Welcome to the TNF's year-end newsletter issue of 2021. It is my sincere hope that this newsletter finds you all well. As I write this column, Thanksgiving is just behind us. My husband and I spent Thanksgiving dinner with our extended family outside Salt Lake City, Utah. It was so good to be surrounded with family and loved ones on this holiday because November is a difficult month for me as Thao (Joe)'s birthday is on November 28th, 1992. I trust that all of you had a peaceful and healthy Thanksgiving holiday.

As the pandemic is still with us and with the new variant Omicron being reported in South Africa today, I understand that many of you may feel anxious and confused as we approach this holiday season. As you might have heard, Governor Hogan encouraged all of us Marylanders to get a booster shot as soon as possible. My husband and I both got our booster shots during the last week of October. I strongly recommend that you get the booster shot to protect yourself from this deadly virus and its mutations.

Please mark your calendar. Our Third Juried Art Show will be on **Saturday, October 22nd, 2022, at 501A York Road in Towson, MD.** More details will be posted on our web site

in late February of 2022 when we issue a Call for Artwork. Our art show next year will have a theme of Reconciliation. As I mentioned during the opening of Daybreak art show this past April, as a suicide loss survivor, my journey to healing has been long and filled with twists and turns, punctuated with shifting emotions. Being on that journey has taught me to make peace with myself after so many years of blaming myself for Thao's tragic death. That peaceful feeling is what reconciliation means to me. To other non-loss survivors, reconciliation may mean differently to you. But I hope that you will consider submitting your works to the show. If you know someone, please spread the word, and help us promote the event. I hope we will have another smashing success with the art show.

As we approach the holiday season, please consider supporting the Foundation and local artists by purchasing one of their works listed on the [Foundation's website](#). Thank you in advance for your continued support and have a safe and healthy holiday season as well as a Happy 2022!

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TN Foundation Board of Directors

Michael Biderman, Director
Philip Hall, Director
Nhung T. Hendy, President
Secretary & Social Media Manager, vacant



SAVE THE DATE!

Reconciliation Juried Art Show

Saturday, **OCTOBER 22, 2022**
7 P.M. to 10 P.M. 501 York Rd.,
Towson MD 21204



We Remember You

By *Rabbis Sylvan Kamens and Jack Riemer*

*In the rising of the sun
And in its going down,
In the blowing of the wind
And in the chill of winter,
In the opening of buds
And in the rebirth of spring,
We remember you.
In the blueness of the sky
And in the warmth of summer,
In the rustling of leaves
And in the beauty of autumn,
In the beginning of the year
And when it ends,
We remember you.
When we are weary
And in need of strength,
When we are lost and sick at heart,
When we have joys, we yearn to
share,
We remember you.
For long as we live, you too shall live,
For you are a part of us,
And we will always remember.*



Reflecting on my Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

By *Nhung Hendy*



This year, for the second time in a row, I volunteered with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) to serve as a facilitator of a breakout group session on the International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day. It was held virtually again this year using Zoom due to the lingering concern caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was not as well attended as last year with about 58-60 people from Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and Virginia in attendance.

I helped facilitate a group discussion session of 5 mothers who all lost their daughters to suicide. My group ranged from those who lost their daughters almost 2 decades ago to those who have just lost their daughters within the past year during the pandemic. There was a mother who lost her 26-year-old daughter in October of 2020 during peak of the pandemic. I admired her courage in sharing her experience with all of us when her loss was so recent. I let the group know that it took me a few years to be able to open up to others about losing my daughter. We all felt connected with one another as

mothers who lost our beloved daughters. We shared our stories and experiences on grieving and seeking peace as we shared our individual journeys to healing. I admired the two mothers for being strong and open to sharing their stories with us considering their recent losses and how raw everything might still have been to them. They taught me about signs and encouraged me to look for signs around me that may help connect me with my daughter. They mentioned how being spiritual had helped ground them and support them through the first year of their grief journey.

I left the event feeling more at peace than before. I now know that reality is what I think it is and I should start looking for signs to connect me with Thao (Joe)'s spirits.



IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE

Contact Nhung Hendy,
President, TN Foundation Inc.
nhung@tnscholarshipforthearts.org
 410-663-0207

Did telehealth care for treating PTSD and bipolar disorder improve patient outcomes?

Summarized by Mike Biderman

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of telehealth due to social distancing. A group of researchers led by Dr. John C. Fortney from the department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington, conducted a large-scale study in which they compared two approaches to treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder. 1,004 adult patients were selected from 24 primary care clinics without on-site psychiatrists or psychologists to participate in this study. The approaches compared were 1) telepsychiatry/telepsychology enhanced referral (TER) approach in which telepsychiatrists and telepsychologists assumed responsibility for treatment vs 2) telepsychiatry collaborative care (TCC) approach in which telepsychiatrists provided consultation to the primary care team. The primary measure of patient outcome was The Veterans RAND 12-item Health Survey Mental Component Summary (MCS). Prior to treatment, mean scores on the MCS were two standard deviations below the US mean. After 12 months of treatment patients in both groups experienced large and clinically meaningful improvements. There was no significant difference in mean MCS scores between the two groups at the

end of 12 months of treatment. The authors concluded that significantly and substantially improved outcomes were observed in both groups. The authors recommended that from a health care system perspective, clinical leadership should implement whichever approach is most sustainable.

Reference:

Fortney, J.C., et al. (2021). Comparison of Teleintegrated Care and Telereferral Care for Treating Complex Psychiatric Disorders in Primary Care: A Pragmatic Randomized Comparative Effectiveness Trial. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 78, 1189-1199.



A personal essay on mental health during the pandemic

By Mumbi Wainaina, graduating senior, BUAD major, Towson University

For those who suffer from a mental illness some days are relatively easy and other days are incredibly draining – for those with mood disorders feeling your feelings throughout the day while trying to do the same tasks as would be done on an easier day leaves me physically exhausted. Something that has helped me is working towards having serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

This pandemic has left many feeling anxious about the health and wellbeing of themselves and others. It has left many feeling lonely and isolated even when they make efforts to connect with others virtually and I have felt this. I moved from my parents' home because of our shared worry that I would get sick at my job and my family still got sick, which left me devastated and feeling hopeless. Once I realized that I could not change the fact that they were sick or that I could not be there to take care of them, I also realized that there were things I could do to help them so I called home often. I called my sister who was home with my parents and caring for them. In addition, I made sure to take care of myself so that I would not relapse into using negative coping skills. It is not fair, or right that we are in a pandemic and no one person can change the fact that after 20 months, we are still living through this pandemic.

I really believe that managing a mental illness is a journey and it is not easy, but it is one that is absolutely worth taking. I have a semicolon tattoo on my ankle in honor of the fact that every day I continue to work towards recovery is a day I give myself the chance to further heal. My heart hurts in ways I cannot express for those who lost their lives to suicide, and my hope is that others struggling with their mental health will not only receive the care they need as well as serenity to accept the things I cannot change, but courage also to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

