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Family Service's Helpline Volunteer Restores Hope and Saves a Life

A few weeks ago, a young man gave up hope. He sat alone at his kitchen table, loaded his handgun and planned to take his own life. As a last grasp, he called the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and one of Family Service Association of Bucks County's volunteer listeners answered the phone. After keeping the young man on the line for more than an hour, the volunteer heard sounds in the background and asked what was going on. The young man said he was disassembling the gun so he could be safe. He also agreed to provide his location so emergency responders could help him remain safe.

A life was saved that day thanks to the volunteer listener; however, this type of call is not unique. Each and every day, Family Service receives calls from people in distress via their CONTACT Helpline and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Family Service needs additional volunteers to answer the nearly 1000 calls for help they receive each month.

Volunteers are everyday citizens who undergo classroom and on-the-job training until they're comfortable answering calls on their own. They give a minimum of 8 hours a month answering the phones in call centers located in Bucks and Montgomery counties. The call centers are open from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, 7 days a week.

Not all calls are from suicidal individuals. Some callers have limited social interactions and just want someone to hear their voice. Others are struggling with anxiety or depression and don't know where to turn for help.

Right now, Family Service has approximately 40 volunteer listeners. Ideally, they need 120 volunteers to adequately staff all shifts and answer as many calls as possible. You can make a difference in our community. Become a volunteer and help restore hope and save lives.

The next series of training classes will begin on Tuesday, January 19th. For more information or to register for training, contact Ellen Vinson, Director of Volunteer Services, at volunteer@fsabc.org or (215) 757-6916, ext. 202. Volunteer applications are also available online at www.fsabc.org/volunteer.

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Family Service Association of Bucks County is a nonprofit social service organization with locations throughout Bucks County, Pennsylvania. For more than 60 years, Family Service has been improving the lives of children and their families, doing whatever it takes to help them overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Visit www.fsabc.org to donate, volunteer and learn more about how Family Service helped more than 24,000 children, teens and adults last year.