



Contact: Nicki Bedesem, Director of Communications
Phone: (215) 757-6916, ext. 214
Email: nbedesem@fsabc.org

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Family Service's Helpline Volunteer Answers Call and Saves a Life

A college student recently called the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), and one of Family Service Association of Bucks County's volunteer listeners answered the phone. The caller told the listener that he had been thinking about suicide for a while now and, just the night before, he had sat on a bridge contemplating whether or not to jump off.

The caller said he had contacted the student health center to make a therapy appointment, but the earliest appointment he could get was a few weeks away. With the student's permission, Family Service's volunteer listener called the student health center and informed the staff of the caller's thoughts of suicide and experience on the bridge.

The student health center took this very seriously and requested that the caller come in immediately. While on the line with the volunteer listener, the caller walked to the student health center where staff assessed his suicide risk and connected him with the help he needed to be safe.

Family Service's volunteer listener helped save a life that day. Unfortunately, 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 1,000 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 50 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 take place from Monday, June 20th through Friday, June 24th from 10:00 AM to 3:30 PM. To register for training, contact Ellen Vinson, Director of Volunteer Services, at volunteer@fsabc.org or (215) 757-6916, ext. 202 or complete the online application 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.