Family Service's Helpline Listener Answers Call & Saves a Life

An older woman, who had recently been diagnosed with a mental illness, called the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) because she was frightened by auditory hallucinations caused by her illness. One of Family Service Association of Bucks County's listeners answered the phone. The woman shared that her medication was not helping ease her fears, and she felt the only way to stop the voices in her head would be to end her life.

Throughout the call, the woman was very distracted by the hallucinations and felt a need to respond to the voices. She was also crying into the phone and begging the listener to save her. With the support of a mobile crisis team, emergency responders were notified and the listener stayed on the phone until help arrived at the woman's home.

During a follow up call two weeks later, the older woman talked about how she would never forget that day and that the listener had saved her life. She had been hospitalized for a short while, and she is now on new medications and is actively engaged in ongoing mental health treatment.

Family Service's 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.**

Volunteer listeners 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.

Volunteer listeners are everyday citizens making a difference in their community.

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 on Thursdays from October 13th through November 17th from 12:00 to 4:00 PM at Family Service's Langhorne office. 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 ■

Family Service Association of Bucks County is a nonprofit social service organization with locations throughout Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Its mission is to listen, help and care. Every day. 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.

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