

PRESS RELEASE
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Director

Army Reservists Learn About Local Suicide Prevention Efforts

Hagåtña, Guam – on Saturday, September 17, 2011, approximately 127 Army reservists and family members gathered to learn about suicide prevention and early intervention. The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (DMHSA) – Prevention and Training Branch gave a presentation on Guam's *Focus on Life* initiatives describing suicide as a serious public health issue and the work that has been done to collect, analyze and utilize Guam's data to develop data-driven prevention and early intervention strategies with key community partners such as members of the armed forces.

Chaplain Karl V. Flores of the Guam National Guard spoke about stigma as a barrier when addressing suicide. He presented a brief historical background about suicide on Guam from a culturally perspective and from scripture. He encouraged the soldiers to be open to learning about how they can prevent suicide and to develop a deeper understanding of the risk factors that may lead to suicide. He requested that each soldier serve as each other's support system.

Ms. Bobbie Benavente and Ms. Helene Paulino, representing DMHSA's Prevention and Training Branch, described some of the work that has been accomplished to raise community awareness about the rate of suicide on Guam and the educational and referral services that are available to help individuals and organizations help themselves and others. Local research findings and personal testimonies by survivors were presented illustrating the severity of suicide on the island and its impact on families and the broader community. Brochures with information about available suicide prevention trainings, treatment providers, helplines and online resources were distributed.

Mr. Clyde Donato, a special guest presenter and survivor of suicide, told his personal story about the loss of his 20-year old son Corey who was an airman with the Guam Air National Guard. Corey completed suicide in August 2010. Mr. Donato spoke about his personal commitment to be a "lifeguard"; to take from his personal loss and to prevent others from attempting suicide and dying by suicide. He shared that he was not aware that his son was at risk; and that he needed help. He said "Corey was good in covering his pain with smiles and laughter." A strong survivor of suicide, Mr. Donato attended a two-day ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training). He has made it his personal mission to learn about suicide prevention and to get the message out to the community that ***talking makes a difference and help is available***. He shared that he was been able to save his son's life, but he is hopeful that in some way his outspokenness on the issue of suicide will save someone else's life.

The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Training Branch developed a strong partnership with the Guam National Guard and the Guam Army Reserves. It is anticipated that collaborative work will continue to build a safer and healthier community.

For more information, visit www.peaceguam.org or contact the DMHSA Prevention and Training Branch (PEACE office) at 671-477-9079 thru 9083.



Over 127 Army reservists and some family members gather to learn about Suicide Prevention.



Chaplain Karl Flores encouraged soldiers to serve as a support system for their peers.



Clyde Donato talks about his experience as a survivor of suicide and encouraged the Reservists to help those who may be at risk for suicide.



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Army reservists watch a short clip of 20-year old Corey Donato.

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