



# Preventing Suicide: A Community Comes Together

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**Mental Health Awareness &  
Suicide Prevention Alliance**

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**BLOUNT COUNTY**

# Community Health Initiative

**MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS  
AND SUICIDE PREVENTION ALLIANCE**

# What we plan to accomplish in this presentation

- 1) **Mental Illness and Suicide in Blount County:** *a problem hiding in plain sight*
- 2) **Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention Alliance:** *A structure for addressing the problem*
- 3) **Lessons Learned:** *Building on our efforts in your community*

# Suicide is a *very* real problem in our community

Actual headlines from:

**THE DAILY TIMES**

September 29, 2009

**MAN DIES OF SELF  
INFLECTED GUNSHOT AT  
MADISONVILLE DRIVE-IN**

November 2, 2008

**BLOUNT SUICIDES UP FOR 2008**

July 18, 2011

**AUTHORITIES RELEASE  
NAME OF MAN WHO  
FATALLY SHOT HIMSELF  
AFTER STANDOFF**

December 6, 2007

**LOUDON COUNTY  
BOY, 12, DIES OF  
SELF-INFLECTED  
GUNSHOT WOUND**

October 28, 2006

**MAN SHOOTS HIMSELF  
NEAR LITTLE RIVER**

February 4, 2009

**MARYVILLE RESIDENT  
FOUND DEAD IN SMOKY  
MOUNTAINS**

November 23, 2008

**COUPLE'S DEATH A 'SUICIDE  
PACT,' BROTHER SAYS**

November 28, 2006

**POLICE IDENTIFY  
SUICIDE VICTIM**

***“Pulling these articles was a real eye-opener. I honestly did not expect to find so much.***

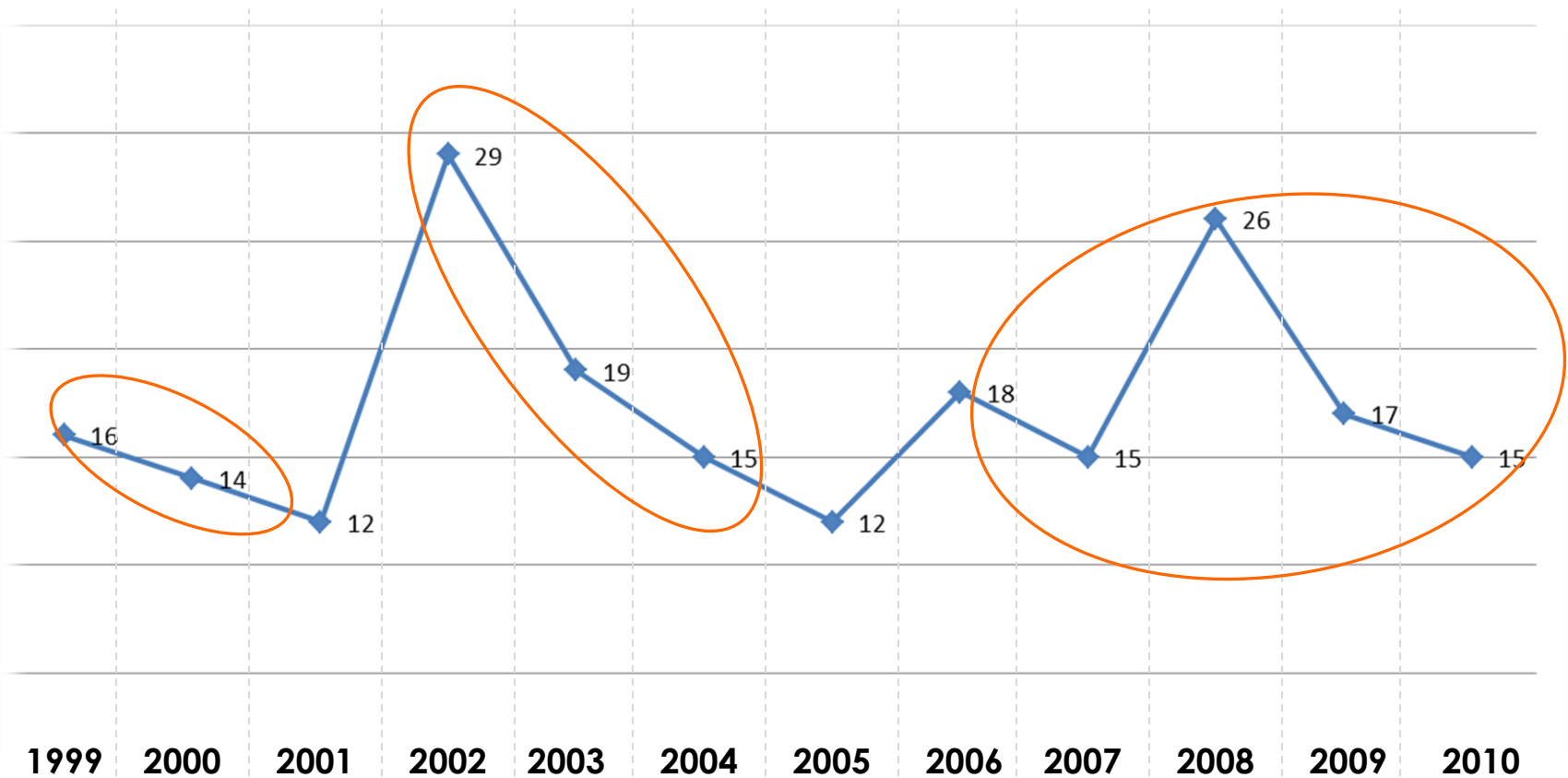
***It is not the policy of The Daily Times to publicize suicides unless they occur in a public venue or if it is a prominent person. This is only the tip of the iceberg.”***

*Linda Albert*

**THE DAILY TIMES**

## Suicides in Blount County

In the USA with our population size, we should “expect” 13 suicides per year



*13 suicides in the county have been identified to date in 2011*



# Suicide is Entwined with Mental Illness

A Closer Look at Where We Are

# Mental Health in Blount County

- 1 in 4 adults experiences mental illness in any year. For Blount County that translates to about 30,750 people
  - What is that number for your county?
- The number of uninsured persons in Blount County is approximately 12,000 and another 12,000 are on TNCare
- The County “Mental Health Safety Net” is strained to the bursting point

# The Mental Health and Suicide Situation in Tennessee

- A recent NIMH study indicates that Tennessee ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in reported mental health problems in the 50 states
- The CDC reports that Tennessee ranks above the national average in suicides
- Do you know the rate of suicide in your county?

# Key Facts About Mental Illness



## Problems Start Early

- **50% of symptoms of mental illness start by age 14**
- **75% of symptoms present by 24 years of age**



## Suicide & Mental Illness Go Together

- **Strong link between mental illness and suicide**
- **Suicide is costly: average annual cost to Blount over past 3 years is \$22M**



## Mental Illness is Highly Treatable

- **Treatment works: 65% success rate with depression, 80% success with bi-polar disorder.**
- **Contrast: success with coronary artery disease is 55%**



# Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention Alliance

Creating A Structured Way to Address the Problem

# MHASPA is part of a community effort



*Supporting Financial Partner*



**Supportive Organizations**

**Substance & Alcohol Abuse Prevention**

**Blount Believers**

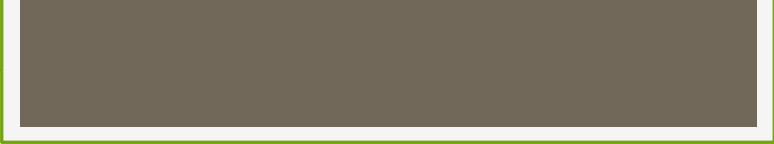
**Blount BENEfits**

**Environmental Health**

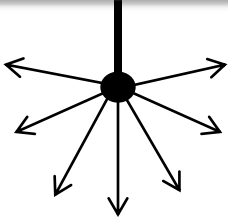
**Teen Pregnancy Prevention**

**Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention Alliance**

**Task Force Against Domestic Violence**



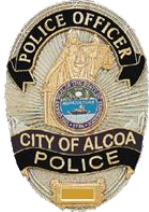
# MHASPA Team



**Blount Children's  
Advocacy Center**



**Psychotherapists  
& Physicians**



**Chaplains**

**School Systems & Family  
Resource Centers**



**Concerned  
Citizens**



**District Attorney's Office**

**Helen Ross McNabb  
Center**

**Medical Examiner's  
Office**

**Peninsula Behavioral  
Health**

**Cherokee  
Behavioral  
Health**

# The “Nuts and Bolts” of Structure

- Stability
- Funding Sources
- Leadership Pool
- Visibility and Partnerships in the Community
- Strength from Multiple Viewpoints and Disciplines

# A clear mission is essential for focus

## **Awareness**

- Educate about mental illness & suicide
- Link people with resources
- Reduce stigma of mental illness for individuals & families

## **Advocacy**

- Actively lobby for change
- Identify resource gaps & seek solutions

## **Action**

- Execute targeted projects to improve mental health & reduce suicides in Blount County

## Strategies “put the mission in motion”

- Focus on ways to improve mental health for people while they are young
- Find ways to maximize our efforts by selecting projects with “long reach”
- Target specific interventions to high risk groups
- Raise public awareness of MHASPA’s work

# Projects align with mission and strategies

## Awareness

- Maintain & distribute guide of mental health resources in the county
- 2009 Suicide Awareness Walk and education campaign

## Advocacy

- Lobby State legislators in Nashville during annual Mental Health Day on the Hill
- Presentation to State Legislators in April 2011

## Action

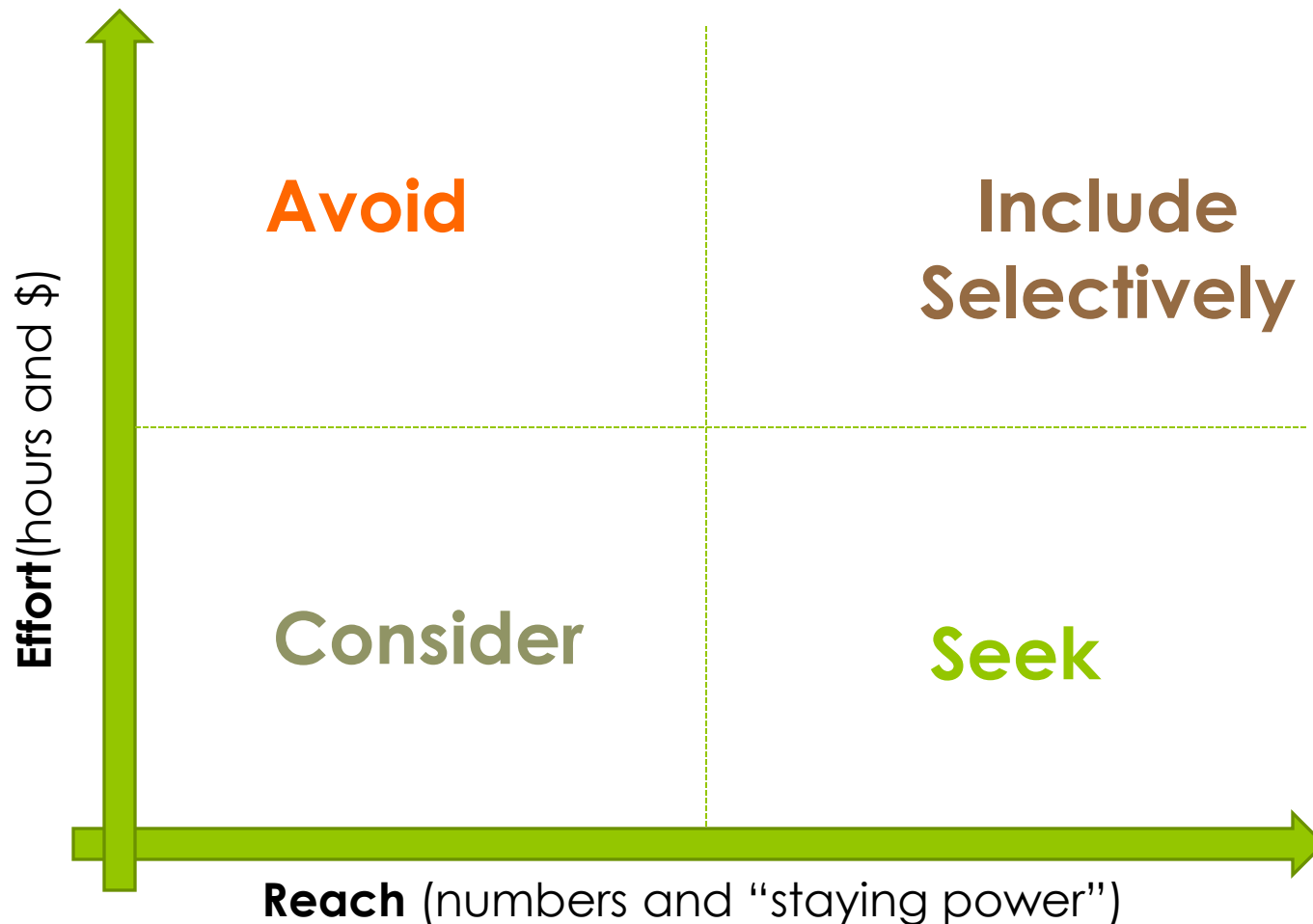
- Inserts in Sunday bulletins for 32 churches during *Mental Illness Awareness Week* for the past 8 yrs.
- Suicide awareness & prevention event at Pellissippi State campus in September 2010



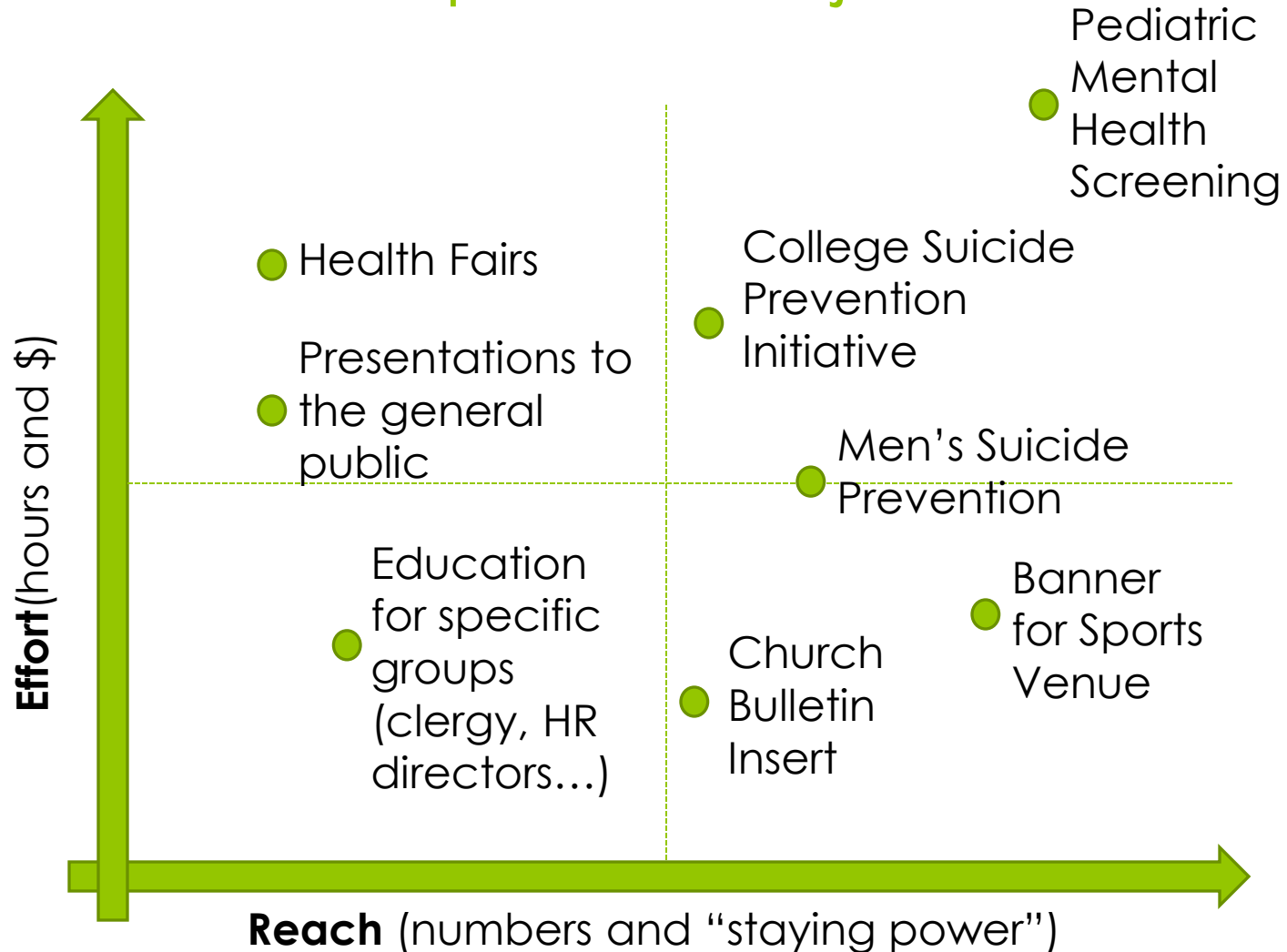
# Focusing on Change

Selecting Key Projects and Initiatives

# Creating a plan for your community



# Examples of Projects



# Discussion and Wrap-up

- Comments and questions about getting started in your area
- Things we are sending home with you