**Our Story Legacy of the Yellow Mustang**

The Yellow Ribbon program was founded in 1994 by the parents and friends of a bright, funny, loving teen, Mike Emme, who took his life when he did not know the words to say, or how to let someone know he was in trouble and needed help.

“Don’t blame yourselves, Mom and Dad, I love you.” It was signed, “Love, Mike 11:45 pm”. In a move that totally stunned all who knew him, Mike died by suicide at the time of his deepest despair. At 11:52 pm his parents pulled into the driveway behind that bright yellow Mustang, – seven minutes too late!

The legacy started when Mike rescued a 1968 Ford Mustang from a field where it sat neglected. He bought it, rebuilt it (as he had others) and painted it bright yellow. As Mike, with his mustangs, became more and more known for his mechanical ability and for helping other teens and friends – he became known as “Mustang Mike”.

Streams of stories began emerging of the help Mike had given to people. A young mother’s car had broken down late one night, leaving her and her two small children stranded on the side of the road. Mike stopped and showed her his driver’s license to assure her he would not harm them, got her car started, then accompanied them home to ensure they arrived safely.

A classmate told of how Mike had canceled his order for a new transmission and bought two used ones from the salvage yard instead so that his classmate could get his car running too.

As the teens gathered to comfort the family, and each other, they discussed the tragedy of losing Mike. Mike’s mom talked with the teens about creating mementos that others could have to remember him with, and they decided that yellow would be used in honor of the cherished yellow mustang. In response to teens asking what can we do?, – she told them, ‘don’t do this, don’t attempt suicide’. ‘If you are ever at this point of pain/despair, please ask for help’! Kids took notes, and cards were made with the message to reach out for help, that It’s OK to Ask4Help!

The night before Mike’s memorial services, his friends shared their grief and tears as they pinned 500 ribbons on the cards. They were placed in a basket at his services. At the end of the services, all the ribbon cards were gone, and it could have ended then, but it did not, thanks to teens with the courage to make a difference and a family who cares about helping others.

Three weeks after Mike’s services – just three weeks! – a call came from a teacher in Wyoming who had a student give her one of those messages of when she needed help. The girl had received in the mail from a friend. The teacher called because she wanted to get help for teens in her area. Other calls began to come in from throughout the U.S., then letters began to flood in – teens were sending those messages/cards everywhere to ‘and The Ripple Effect had begun!

The ribbon became the symbol of the program when the teens began tying them in their hair and pinning them to their clothes and hats on the day Mike died. Yellow in memory of Mike and his cherished ’68 Yellow Mustang, and how he helped so many people.

The HEART in the middle of the ribbon is the symbol of the survivors. Our hearts go on, forever broken, but nurtured and surrounded by the Yellow Ribbon family to help others, to save lives and to work in memory of our loved ones. Our voices will speak for those who cannot.

Dale and Dar Emme are available for Trainings, Presentations and as Keynote and Inspirational Speakers. Call 303.429.3530 or [ask4help@yellowribbon.org](mailto:ask4help@yellowribbon.org) for more information.

<https://yellowribbon.org/file_download/inline/2813a0e2-a025-4915-971c-56db7b5c457b>

Call 800-273-8255 - or -

Text 'HELP' to 741741

Get help immediately!

**Coping Strategies for Teens**

* ***Needing help is not failing…it is simply being human. It’s OK to Ask for Help!!***
  + Spend time with family and friends.
  + Get involved with after-school activities.
  + Volunteer – you have a lot to offer.
  + Think and plan your future. Set realistic goals.
  + Try to be open with your feelings. Write your feelings and thoughts in your journal or diary.
  + Read books & subjects that uplift you.
  + Laugh ~ keep your sense of humor!
  + Consider the importance of spirituality in your life.
  + Accept other’s thanks, compliments toward you, and praise for you.
  + Eat right! – – – Chocolate is good!  Exercise regularly.
  + Do not tolerate physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from anyone. Get help immediately! Seek help if you feel overwhelmed or troubled.
  + Visit [www.teenadvice.org](http://www.teenadvice.org/) or [www.teenhelp.org](http://www.teenhelp.org/)  or [www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now#tc](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now#tc)

**How to respond to a cry for help**

* Breathe!!
* Be honest, caring and show respect.
* Don’t make promises you can’t keep.
* Don’t try to solve their problem.
* Tell them:  
  *“I am glad you called/came/talked to me”  
  “I do care. “What’s happening?”  
  “How can I help”?  
  “Let’s find someone who can help you get through this”.*
* Be A Link®!  And get help- don’t try to do this by yourself…don’t risk lives.
* Remember, you can call the crisis line to help you help another.

The Yellow Ribbon Card ***STARTS THE CONVERSATION***and has NO EXPIRATION DATE.

**If your teen is in immediate crisis:**

* Call 911 - or -
* Call 800-273-8255

Get them, and you, help immediately!



**How to talk to your own teen:**

Talk to your kids to establish that they can talk to you, and to establish a baseline of their knowledge and understanding

* You already teach them life skills
* They are accustomed to learning from you
* Talking about suicide won’t plant the idea
* If you don’t talk to them and teach them, who will?



**Show them the Ask4Help!® Card**

**Tell what you’re learning today (from this review)**

**Ask them: (let them help teach you…)**

* "Do you know about the YR program?”
* “Do you know anyone who has talked of suicide?”
* “You can come talk to me about suicide”
* “Do you know anyone who has attempted suicide?”
* “Have you ever thought of attempting suicide?”
* “What can I do to help?” “We are in this together!”

**How to Respond if their answer is yes I need help**

* *Breathe! Catch your breath!*
* Be genuine, caring, and show respect.
* Don’t lie or make promises you can’t keep. Tell them:
* “I am glad you called/came/talked to me”
* “I do care. Tell me what’s happening in your life”.
* “How can I help”?
* “Let’s find someone who can help you get through this”.

**Tips for preparing to have the conversation with your teen/youth**

     -   Identify your resources  
     -   Identify a buddy you can call  
     -   Remember to say the “S” word  
     -   Choose an appropriate time to talk with them

Youth  who identify and explore at least 3 protective factors, reasons for living, have been linked to reducing the risk of suicide attempts by 70%/80% *(Borowsky, Ireland & Resnick 2001)*



**91% of teenagers surveyed indicated they would first tell a friend of their suicidal thoughts. (Ross, 1985)**

***WHY is that important to us?*** Because teens/youth are faced with this issue right now, some every day, when worried about friends, loved ones, family and/or themselves.  They need to know what to do; how to ask for help and how to respond. It can help save lives, and it can help alleviate the guilt of “I didn’t know what to do” or the guilt of ‘not doing anything’.  You have influence on your kids, and teaching them can make a difference.

**How do I get YR into my teens...**

*school, youth group, club, etc...*

One of the best things you can do to help get the Yellow Ribbon Program into a specific community is talk to the stake-holders.

For instance, a school.  Visit with a few other parents and go talk to the school counselors and/or principal.  Share your interest in making sure the students and all staff have Yellow Ribbon Training made available.  We would love to hear from you as well, please feel free to [contact us](http://yellowribbon.org/who-we-are/contact.html) to learn more, get answers to questions and 10 free YR cards to take with you to the meeting.  We're always happy to help open doors to making suicide prevention accessible to everyone.