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Attitudes In Reverse® Helps Colleges Comply with the Madison Holleran Suicide Prevention Act with Life-Saving Education

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY (March 12, 2017) – Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10- to 24-year-olds nationwide and the suicide rate in this age group in New Jersey increased by 14 percent from the three-year periods of 2011-2013 to 2012-2014. Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR™) aims to work with colleges and universities throughout New Jersey to prevent suicides with its educational program for students, *Coming Up for AIR™*; its popular and powerful *In Their Shoes™* exhibit; and Youth Mental Health First Aid training for faculty and staff. With AIR's programs and the requirements of the Madison Holleran Suicide Prevention Act, entire campus communities will be well prepared to reduce suicide risk and address crises if and when they occur.

The Madison Holleran Suicide Prevention Act requires the availability of healthcare professionals who are trained in mental health and reducing suicides 24 hours a day either remotely or on campus to assist students who experience crises. Students must receive information about these resources via electronic mail, no later than 15 days following the beginning of each semester.

"We have presented *Coming Up for AIR* to more than 60,000 students in several states since 2011 and after these interactive presentations, students have opened up about their struggles and have received help," said Tricia Baker, Co-Founder of AIR. "We teach students the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders; emphasize that they are biological, brain-based illnesses and nothing to be ashamed of; and encourage students to speak up if they experience symptoms for any length of time. We always have therapy dogs with us and we share our own experiences with having lost loved ones and having struggled ourselves. These unique components of our program establish connections with the students and their comfort in sharing their own experiences," she explained.

The *In Their Shoes* exhibit consists of 264 pairs of shoes, representing the same number of 10- to 24-year-olds in New Jersey who lost hope and took their lives between 2012 and 2014. "This is a powerful exhibit and we

More

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continue to receive numerous requests for it,” said AIR Co-Founder Kurt Baker. AIR recently added a VIP section, featuring shoes donated by prominent individuals in the mental health field, including Governor Richard Codey, Former Congressman Patrick Kennedy, and cast and crew members from the popular television show *Supernatural*, who support AIR. “These shoes have inspirational messages on them,” Kurt noted.

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is a nationally recognized program endorsed by Former President and First Lady Obama. Both Tricia and Kurt Baker are certified YMHFA instructors. Through this eight-hour training program, adults learn to recognize when students are experiencing mental health crises and the actions to take to effectively intervene, de-escalate the crises and refer the students to mental health professionals if needed. “We strongly encourage the faculty and staff of colleges and universities, as well as elementary, middle and high schools, to receive this training. It can literally make the difference between life and death for many young people,” Kurt said.

To discuss scheduling these life-saving presentations, please contact AIR at info@attitudesinreverse.org or 609-945-3200. Please also visit www.attitudesinreverse.org for more details about AIR, including testimonials from students, teachers and principals about the impact of the programs.

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Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR™) was established by Tricia, Kurt and Katelyn Baker of Plainsboro, NJ, in 2010, soon after their son/brother Kenny died by suicide following a long battle against severe depression and anxiety. Their mission is to save lives by educating students about mental health, related disorders and suicide prevention. Since January 2011, they have presented to more than 60,000 students in middle and high schools and colleges in New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Missouri and Texas. AIR also offers Youth Mental Health First Aid instruction and includes the *AIR Dogs: Paws for Minds™* program, bringing dogs into schools to help students de-stress and engage in the conversation about mental health. In addition, displaced dogs with the ability to serve as Emotional Support Dogs, are matched with individuals who have mental health disorders or developmental disabilities, thereby saving two lives with each match. For more information about AIR™, please visit www.attitudesinreverse.org or call 609-945-3200.