

Calgary AB: September 9, 2015

## Helping to make Calgary a suicide-safer community

Four Calgary Organizations have partnered to launch a campaign promoting suicide awareness, intervention skills training, and resources for those in distress. The campaign begins September 10th—celebrated each year as World Suicide Prevention Day—and will run for several months. Public service messages displayed on and around LRT lines will encourage Calgarians to reach out to others if they are in distress or know someone who is.

The campaign follows Calgary Transit’s initiative to train over 500 staff in suicide prevention skills. “Calgary Transit is committed to ensuring the safety of our riders. We have worked closely with our community partners to train staff in suicide awareness and intervention,” said Stephen Hansen, Safety and Security Manager at Calgary Transit. Hansen noted that since its implementation in 2013, the training had already enabled Calgary Transit staff to save several lives.

The Centre for Suicide Prevention, an education centre and branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, provided the intervention-skills training. “Education is one of the few internationally accepted best-practices in suicide prevention. We commend the community leadership of Calgary Transit as they came forward to educate and train their staff in suicide awareness and intervention” said Executive Director Mara Grunau. “More than 500 Albertans die by suicide each year. The more people we have trained in suicide prevention, the more we are able to identify and help those at risk. Suicide is preventable.”

LivingWorks Education developed the training programs and supported Calgary Transit in teaching staff suicide alertness and awareness skills. LivingWorks’ training programs are based on the idea that everyone in the community can help to prevent suicide. “We all have a part to play,” said Richard Ramsay, President of LivingWorks. “Virtually anyone can learn the skills to reach out to someone who may be thinking of suicide and help them stay safe. We believe that by making those skills available to as many people as possible, no matter who they are or what they do, more lives will be saved.”

Distress Centre Calgary has been serving Calgarians for 45 years by operating a 24-hour crisis phone line. As part of the recent partnership they have now worked out protocols to receive calls from Calgary Transit help phones as well. “Distress Centre volunteers are there because they care about the people in their community. They are there to help people who are struggling—sharing the pain of that struggle with someone who cares can save a life from suicide,” said Acting Executive Director Jerilyn Dressler. Dressler added that 24-hour phone support is available at 403-266-HELP (4357) and that online help is also available at [www.distresscentre.com](http://www.distresscentre.com).

*If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm, please contact Distress Centre Calgary at 403-266-HELP (4357). Resources are available to help.*

Contacts:

Owen Stockden, Communications Officer, LivingWorks Education 403-209-0242 ext 224

Crystal Walker, Communications Coordinator, Centre for Suicide Prevention, 403-245-3900 ext 229