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NEW MEXICO TELEVISION STATIONS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS MOBILIZE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST YOUTH SUICIDE

**ABC AND PBS TELEVISION STATIONS STATEWIDE TO AIR
30-MINUTE DOCUMENTARY "COMING BACK"
FOLLOWED BY 30-MINUTE STATEWIDE SUICIDE PREVENTION SHOW**

AIRING:

December 15th from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

KNME 5, KRWG 22, KENW 3

December 16 from 8:00 – 9:00pm and Dec. 18 from 4:00 – 5:00pm

KOAT 7

*"When I was 13...I ...took a whole bottle of aspirin because I wanted to die.
I didn't want to be alive. I didn't want to be here"*

Desiree 15 years old

ALBUQUERQUE, NM — New Mexico's suicide rates have historically been nearly twice the national rate and suicide is the third leading cause of death among NM youth. 2001 statistics indicate that one in five adolescents in New Mexico had seriously considered killing themselves and one in ten had attempted suicide. Now a major project to educate teens, parents and educators about the signs and symptoms of youth depression and suicide will be launched this December presented by the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, the Department of Health, the Human Services Department, and the Public Education Department in association with Cooperative Educational Services, Competitive Benefits Administrators, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico, New Mexico Parent Teacher Association, New Mexico Suicide Prevention Coalition, the New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators, KNME TV, KOAT TV, KRWG TV, KENW TV and The Albuquerque Journal.

On Wednesday, December 15th from 7:00 – 7:30 p.m. the New Mexico **PBS stations** (KNME-TV Albuquerque/Santa Fe - Ch. 5, KRWG-TV Las Cruces - Ch. 22 and KENW-TV Portales - Ch. 3) will air a 30-minute documentary, “*Coming Back: A death and life story about sons, daughters and friends.*” told from the viewpoint of teens who have attempted suicide. From 7:30 – 8:00 p.m. the stations will air a follow up program that will include discussion about prevention of youth suicide from parents, educators and community perspectives. On Thursday, December 16 from 8 to 9pm and on Saturday, December 18 from 4 to 5pm **ABC station** KOAT-TV 7 and its sister stations in New Mexico will repeat the hour long broadcast.

Discussion of suicide and depression is not easy or simple. But **the warning signs of suicide can be recognized, understood and addressed** by loved ones. A think tank of experts working over the past two years have donated research, guidance and insight into the specific approach for communication and outreach that can be used most effectively in New Mexico based on current programs and opportunities.

The project **focuses on suicide prevention and empowering family and peer friends throughout the community with tools to help.** These tools will include specific information and warning signs so that those most likely to have contact with potential victims of suicide (teen peers) will know when to take action and ways to help. The primary voice in the program will be that of young people, those who have attempted suicide and those who have been affected by it.

The elements of the project include:

30 Minute Broadcast Documentary

30 Minute Live Follow-up Show Broadcast immediately after the documentary

30 Minute Training Tape for Educators disseminated through all the public schools in NM

30 Minute Educational Tape for Families disseminated through NM PTA

Series of Informational/Promotional commercials

Curriculum Guide for use with the Documentary

The project is a unique collaboration of several state departments. And , according to Governor Bill Richardson, “Through this project, we hope to create a new awareness and understanding of youth

suicide and depression and give communities throughout the state tools that will enable them to intervene and help prevent this terrible tragedy. ”

Executive Producer Chris Schueler and Christopher Productions head up this multi-level project. John Lawrence of KNME-TV, Taz Painter of KOAT-TV and Chris Schueler are producing the follow up program.

“When you see the statistics and you talk with the families, the suicide survivors, you know we have a devastating problem,” says Chris Schueler. “But when you meet the incredible advocates and the people in the trenches, the non-profits groups and the state experts – when you see the enthusiasm and expertise of folks throughout the state – and when you’re able to combine that with the power of ABC and PBS television stations around the state, plus the Albuquerque Journal – you know we have an opportunity to help solve this problem. As a company and as individuals, we are honored to be working to help save the lives of our youth in the New Mexico.”

“This unique collaboration affords KNME and KOAT the opportunity to combine and focus their collective resources, convening a statewide look at, and a discussion about, youth suicide, which is an extremely difficult subject to tackle,” said Ted A Garcia, KNME-TV General Manager and Chief Executive Officer.

Mary Lynn Roper, President and General Manager of KOAT-TV echos a similar sentiment, "Many of us have noted, year after year, that teen suicide is a huge and very sad issue for New Mexico. KOAT welcomes the opportunity to provide a forum for discussing solutions to this devastating problem and not just report the aftermath."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Beginning in early December, viewers will be able to log onto the **websites** of KNME-TV (www.knmetv.org), KOAT-TV (www.thenewmexicochannel.com), or Christopher Productions (www.christopherproductions.org) and be linked to facts, statistics and organizations where questions may be asked and help found through an on line curriculum guide.

THE FOLLOWING PROJECT PARTICIPANTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS:

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