

Profile of John De Haven for SAVE newsletter, Spring 2005

SAVE Profiles Volunteer John De Haven

By Dave Morton

John De Haven is a 3-year veteran of SAVE's Speakers Bureau, giving several speeches each month to schools, colleges, professional and community groups in the Twin Cities area and other locations in Minnesota. Audience sizes have ranged from as few as 5, to as many as 300. When speaking to youth, John says they're very attentive: "This subject is seldom discussed at home, so they're very curious about it."

John, 58, is married, lives in Plymouth Minnesota, and has 2 grown children with his wife, Karen. He volunteers for other organizations such as State Services for the Blind, plays a little golf, and is an avid watcher of sports. He wouldn't mind retiring from his job of 25 years, but "my daughter just started grad school!"

Despite his busy schedule as a Vice President at Callan Publishing, John brings an energy and personal passion to the subject of 'suicide prevention'. As John recounts, "I found SAVE after a frightening experience with a friend who was in a suicidal crisis. I later realized I was woefully under informed on the subject, so I contacted SAVE in search of some "education." A reading of SAVE's literature led to addressing groups about depression and suicide.

At the conclusion of John's speeches, people sometimes tell him that they now realize that someone they know - or they themselves - are suffering from depression, and inquire about seeking help. He often can predict who will approach: He can see the anxiety on their faces as he's speaking. "Of course I cannot prove it, but I am confident that SAVE's message has come to some in a most timely manner. Often, this is true life-saving work." he notes.

On one occasion, a troubled girl approached John following a high school speech, and wanted to know what to do about her depression. He suggested that she begin by visiting school counselors. The girl replied that her parents didn't want her to do so since they didn't think she was depressed. He volunteered to walk her down to the counselor's office, and she accepted. John stresses, "It's those who haven't been touched by depression or suicide who need to hear the message - in this case, the girl's parents. They didn't know the signs of depression, so they didn't take her complaints seriously."

Denise Dumas of SAVE welcomes John's participation. "He is absolutely committed to our speaker's bureau. He has such a strong passion to do this for SAVE, and he's really good with connecting with youth. John is also a great mentor for new speakers."

In summarizing his speaking for SAVE, John says, "I really like doing this work. Sometimes I think my time with SAVE may be the most important and most satisfying thing I do these days."

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