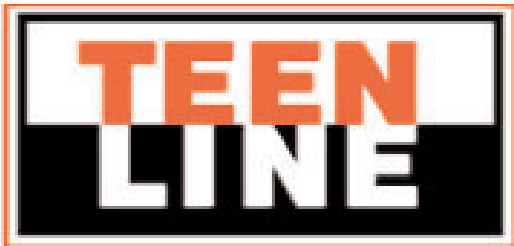


# SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

By Christie Taylor and Diana Maiocco

## PETER WERNER HELPS TO DIRECT TEENS TOWARDS A BRIGHTER FUTURE



Adolescence can be a difficult time. Teenagers deal with a wide range of new experiences during this transitional period, such as relationships, decisions about the future, and the physical changes their bodies are going through. Some teenagers, however, can become overwhelmed and feel they have nowhere to turn. Their search for answers may lead them to begin "self-medicating" their pain by abusing drugs or alcohol. Or they might express their rage and frustration by committing acts of violence. They don't want to talk about their emotions or problems because they may think that no one will understand or that others will make fun of them. Too often, these troubled teens choose to take their own lives.

For *Moonlighting* director Peter Werner, this is a tragedy that has hit close to home. According to Peter, "The first dramatic film I directed related to my own concerns about suicide and the tragic number of friends and family who had succumbed to this disease. That short film (*In the Region of Ice*) won an Academy Award. Last year, I returned to this arena to direct *The Pact* for Lifetime, starring Megan Mullally. Through the movie, I met the people at *Teen Line* and was so deeply

impressed by their work talking to teenagers and helping not only prevent suicide, but heal."

*Teen Line* was founded in California in 1981 as a way for teenagers to call and talk about their problems, whether it's abuse, AIDS, alcoholism, depression, divorce, drugs, homelessness, homosexuality, pregnancy or worse yet, suicide. The *Teen Line* staff screens and selects about 80 teenagers a year for hotline and outreach. The listeners complete a thirteen-week, sixty-hour training program emphasizing specialized listening and communications techniques. *Teen Line's* listeners help callers clarify their concerns, discuss the options available to them and make referrals to community resources under the supervision of professional counselors.

These mental health professionals volunteer to provide on-site consultation and support to the teen listeners. For more information about *Teen Line*, please go to their web-site on: [www.teenlineonline.org](http://www.teenlineonline.org).

To better understand teen suicide, here are some statistics found on the *American Psychiatric Association's* web-site at [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org):

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 19 years.
- Every day, 14 young people (ages 15 to 24) commit

suicide, or approximately 1 every 100 minutes.

- Almost all people who kill themselves have a diagnosable mental or substance use disorder; the majority have more than one.
- Fifty-three percent of young people who commit suicide abuse substances.
- Four times as many men as women commit suicide, but young women attempt suicide three times more frequently.

Wherever you live, local chapters of the *American Psychiatric Association* can also help by recommending a psychiatrist, a physician with special training in emotional and mental health. Help can also be found through local mental health associations, family physicians, a county medical society, a local hospital's department of psychiatry, a community mental health center, a mood disorders program affiliated with a university or medical school, or a family service/social agency.

By taking the time to talk to troubled teenagers about their emotions or problems, you can help prevent the senseless tragedy of teen suicide. Please let them know help is available.

Thank you Peter for bringing this sad but serious issue to our attention.

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