

New Field of Hope for Depression Survivors

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ANNAPOLIS, Md., May 9 /PRNewswire/ -- In support of May's National Mental Health Month and to kick off spring, the new nonprofit iFred -- the International Foundation for Research and Education on Depression (www.depression.org) -- is shining the light on depression survivors and inviting others to help by donating a seed to the 1st Annual Field of Hope. This field is in honor of those who are surviving or affected by depression, serving as a symbol that brighter days are coming. This year's field will be planted in Goodland, Kansas and everyone is invited to buy a seed to ensure a bright and beautiful field for as little as \$10 at www.thefieldofhope.org. All contributions are tax deductible, and at the end of the season you will receive a postcard of the sunny field and know that you have put money towards a cause that is working to create a better world for depression survivors.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20060509/NYTU117>)

Unfortunately, despite the magnitude and severity of the illness, the stigma for depression and mental illness today is worse than it was 50 years ago. One in four people are affected by depression through family, friends, and coworkers, and one in 10 experience a major depressive episode every year. The World Health Organization has estimated that by the year 2020, depression will be the 2nd leading cause of health impairment worldwide. Depression is the leading cause of suicide and often co-occurs with other illnesses such as heart disease and cancer. It also is associated with addictions, eating disorders, and other forms of escapism that, while they may help people feel better, are ultimately destructive.

"We have to change the way we look at depression and change the number of resources we are putting towards it. Over 30,000 Americans commit suicide every year, and over 450,000 go to emergency rooms due to self-inflicted injuries, yet few resources go to the

research, treatment, and prevention of depression. We are losing more Americans to depression than wars, homicides, and certain cancers. I do not call myself a depression sufferer, I am a survivor, just as someone with cancer, heart disease, or arthritis is a survivor," says Kathryn Goetzke White, CEO and founder of iFred.

Larry Kleingartner, President of the National Sunflower Association, thinks the relation between sunflowers and depression survivors makes perfect sense. "Sunflowers are the most humanlike flower there is. The sunflowers, like humans, need air, water, nutrients, care, and space to flourish. They both grow towards the light and thrive in the sun. And yellow is the color of happiness. Depression survivors, when properly cared for and treated, move toward happiness."

A recent study by Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, showed that flowers have an immediate positive impact on happiness (100% of the time, with both males and females), that they have a long-term positive effect on moods, and that they make intimate connections. The study also said sunflowers are said to enhance alertness, as yellow light waves stimulate the brain. A recent study by Texas A&M also found that placing flowers and plants in offices led individuals to be more creative, better problem solvers, and more productive.

Kirsten Straughan, a member of the iFred advisory board, Registered Dietician and author of Fit Moms, Healthy Family, points out that there are many health benefits to sunflowers and sees the symbol as a positive connection. "Sunflower seeds and oils are on an upward trend. They are loaded with nutrients such as vitamin E, magnesium, selenium, Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids and fiber that assist in good nutrition -- even in lowering cholesterol." Lynn Hoelting, Chairman of the Goodland Regional Medical Center Board of Trustees and General Manager of Mueller Grain in Goodland, Kansas, also likes the connection. "Sunflower oil is the 4th largest consumed oils in the world, and depression is one of the most widespread medical conditions," he said.

John White, President of iFred, is energized to shed light on depression in the business world. "Depression is costing our corporations billions of dollars annually in lost productivity, ultimately affecting the bottom line. There are so many individuals not receiving treatment because of the stigma -- they would rather tell their boss they committed a crime than they were dealing with depression. It is to everyone's benefit when that changes -- the companies, the individuals, and society as a whole."

iFred was started by Kathryn Goetzke White last year when she was looking for a nonprofit to benefit from part of the proceeds of the Mood-lites product line she was about to launch. Kathryn lost both her father and her aunt to untreated depression both ending in suicide. She herself experienced multiple depressive episodes before getting treatment. Seeing a need to draw attention with more senses, color and life to depression and its treatment, she created iFred.

Please join us in alleviating the stigma associated with depression. Donate a seed. Become a spokesperson. Give generously with your time and money to this ambitious cause and highly stigmatized illness. iFred needs your support, as do the millions of depression survivors, friends and family that daily deal with the condition. We must eradicate the stigma so people feel comfortable seeking treatment. Visit www.depression.org or e-mail info@ifred.org and get involved today.

NOTE TO EDITOR: iFred is asking for a \$10 donation to plant a seed in the field of hope for you or your loved one (or as many as you would like!). iFred is looking for media to run public service announcements already created on www.depression.org or www.thefieldofhope.org. iFred is also looking for survivors and supporters of this new organization that would like to step out of the shadow and share their stories of depression.

SOURCE iFred

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