

Writing Competition Winners Tell the Untold Stories of Survivors

American Association of Suicidology Announces Writing Competition Winners

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, January 12, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The American Association of Suicidology](#) (AAS) is thrilled to announce the winners of the 2022 Dr. Paul G. Quinnett Lived



This annual competition highlights how we can work together to reach those who may feel alone.”

*AAS Chief Executive Officer
Leeann Sherman, MPS, CAE*

Experience Writing Competition. By sharing writers’ lived experience with suicide attempts, ideations or as a loss survivor, the contest seeks to promote healing and increase the reach and impact of untold stories from loss survivors.

This year’s winners were:

- First Place: Shawwna Holweger, “Enough”
- Second Place: Teresa M. Theophano, “A Promise”
- Third Place: Karina Garcia, “Hurt Child, Fractured Adult”

Holweger, a mother of five, has worked in the mental health field as a case manager for children for three years. Writing her story presented an opportunity to return to a treasured hobby as well as a therapeutic experience. “In the course of letting the words flow, I came to the realization that it is ok to struggle, and it's okay if I didn't win. It helped me process these two facts, and I've since felt more confident about voicing when I am not doing well. Additionally, my family read my paper, and I feel it repaired some of those damaged relationships. We've been able to talk about it, and I've felt very supported by those around me,” she attests.

Theophano is a New York City-based licensed clinical social worker and freelance writer/editor. A program director at a geriatric mental health nonprofit, she co-founded the NYC Queer Mental Health Initiative, a peer-based support network, in 2014 and has an interest in exploring perspectives on mental health from clinicians with lived experience. “I believe with all my heart that when people share their stories of struggle and survival, when anyone discloses lived experience of mental health conditions, we chip away at the stigma that still surrounds depression and suicide,” she notes. “Many mental health care providers like me have lived experience; it’s crucial that we acknowledge and normalize this among each other. In addition, I believe that queer stories save queer lives, and I committed years ago to telling mine publicly.”

Garcia is a writer from Tampa who holds a Bachelor's in Creative Writing from the University of

South Florida. After surviving a suicide attempt in her final year of university, Karina made it her mission to share with others the possibility of recovery and healing. "After reading my words, I hope others will feel less alone. Depression becomes even more dangerous when an individual is isolated, and by sharing my story I hope to illustrate that so many of us have hidden traumas and struggles that more of us can relate to than we may think; and by sharing our stories with each other, we can destigmatize our struggles and build a helpful community."

This year's committee chair is Glenn Proctor, Pulitzer Prize winner, Pulitzer judge, mental health advocate and educator, suicide loss survivor, executive coach and communications strategist. Proctor received AAS's 2022 Loss Survivor of the Year award at AAS's [Annual Conference](#) in Chicago.

"This year we had an exceptional range of submissions from a wide variety of often unheard voices," Proctor notes. "By sharing our truths, we are helping others we may never meet come to terms with issues those closest to them may never know they are facing. The realization they are not alone can and does save lives."

"This annual competition highlights how we can work together to reach those who may feel alone," said AAS Chief Executive Officer Leeann Sherman, MPS, CAE. "By sharing their resilience and strength, the words of attempt survivors and those with lived experience of suicide are having a tremendous impact on those who read them today, and those who will see them years from now. They are bravely creating a lasting legacy of healing."

Dr. Jenn Carson, AAS's ASLE Division Chair, served as the liaison between the committee chair, the judges and AAS leadership. Rachel Ng, AAS's Director of Membership, and Amelia Lehto, AAS's Chief of Staff, led the staff support effort. Essay winners receive a plaque and monetary awards of \$1,500 for first place, \$1,000 for second place and \$500 for third place and will be recognized during the AAS23 Special Awards Presentation held at the annual conference in Portland, OR in April. To read the winning pieces, visit: <https://suicidology.org/pgq-winners/>

About American Association of Suicidology

The American Association of Suicidology is the world's largest membership-based suicide prevention organization. Founded in 1968 by Edwin S. Shneidman, PhD, AAS promotes the research of suicide and its prevention, public awareness programs, public education and training for professionals and volunteers. The membership of AAS includes mental health and public health professionals, researchers, suicide prevention and crisis intervention centers, school districts, crisis center professionals, survivors of suicide loss, attempt survivors, and a variety of laypersons who have an interest in suicide prevention. You can learn more about AAS at www.suicidology.org.

Responsible reporting on suicide, including stories of hope and resilience, can prevent more suicides. Please visit the Media as Partners in Suicide Prevention: Suicide Reporting

Recommendations for more details. For additional information, please visit SuicideReportingToolkit.com and Stanford University's Media and Mental Health Initiative. For crisis services anywhere in the world, please visit FindAHelpline.org.

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