

2019 Citizen of the Year

Patricia M. Green:

Good evening to the members of The New Jersey Psychological Association and their family and friends,

I want to thank you for presenting me with the award of Citizen of the Year. Thanks to Dr. Hulon Newsome as well as Donna Zolli for thinking that I deserve such recognition. I am humbled by this and truly feel undeserving of this honor. I really don't look at me as such a person. You see, I am a wife, of 34 years to a wonderful, supportive husband, Bill, a mother of six children who are no longer looked at as children since the youngest is 19 and lastly, I became a grandmother, or as I like to refer myself to as Bam to little Jameson.

On June 14, 2012, my family's lives were forever changed. It was the day after my son Nicky's Freshman year of high school where his youngest brother Danny discovered that Nicky had completed suicide. I can remember that moment like it was yesterday as I was downstairs getting ready for work when Danny called down to me. Our house was in chaos at 6:45 in the morning. You see, this was not only inconceivable, unbelievable, just unimaginable to our family but our entire community as well. By 7:30 that morning I had about 20 teachers and coaches on my front lawn. They all had the same questions that I had that I still have today-

WHAT DID I MISS?

WHAT COULD I HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY TO NOT HAVE THIS HAPPEN?

WHY DIDN'T NICKY JUST TALK TO ME

You see, Nicky seemed to love life. He always was smiling, had loads of friends and involved not only in athletics but in school activities. He always seemed to have a passion for whatever he did. He was a great kid, a great friend, student, athlete, and brother. He was always there to help his friends or adults, showing his caring and compassion. The thing is Nicky always was a talker. He obviously just didn't talk about his hurt.

Our family chose to not ignore the void but to try to fill it the best we can with Nicky stories. We chose to talk about Nicky, about a silly dance he would do or how he couldn't say his "s". For me, my greatest fear aside from worrying about my other children, is that people will forget Nicky. I cannot let that happen. As a family, we have chosen to remember him and the positives he brought to our lives and to the lives of others. We also choose to talk about Nicky's suicide and that this was an event that could have been prevented if Nicky just talked to someone. So, when given the opportunity we will embrace others with that message.

It wasn't long after Nicky's death that I truly needed to do something. I kept saying that I did not want another mother to feel how I do. In July of 2012, I started The Nicky Green Foundation. Its' mission is to promote the awareness and prevention of youth suicide. This is accomplished through outreach and involvement in the community wherever youth are.

The Nicky Green Foundation addresses their mission by:

- ***Working with, supporting and funding others***
 - Other organizations and charities that help kids and families in the local communities.
- ***Scholarships***
 - Started in 2013 at Rancocas Valley Regional High School providing numerous yearly scholarships as well as multiple high schools in Burlington County.
 - To date, The Nicky Green Foundation has given over \$80,000 dollars in scholarships

The Foundation sponsors numerous events that youth attend where literature is provided about youth suicide and how it is the 2nd leading cause of death among 10-18 year old. We express to youth that there is no shame or judgement to be made if they are feeling down, depressed or just not good about themselves. We stress the need to have kids- ACT. To Acknowledge their friend who might text them that they want to hurt themselves and to do something; To Care about that person. To show them that they care loved and a good person; and most important to Talk. If not to their parent then a friend, a teacher, a coach- someone.

The Foundation holds two major events each year: A 5K Run and Family Fun Walk every June as well as a Festival every September. It is purposely held in September recognizing Suicide Awareness Month. We utilize these events to bring the community together and talk about our mental health and bring awareness to the forefront.

On June 14th, 2012, my son, Nicky became a statistic of the "Silent Epidemic" of youth suicide and I became a member of the club that no parent wants to belong to- the club of losing your child. We as a family are choosing to take our family's tragedy and make it a positive for Nicky because he lived his life that way. And as a mother who has experienced such a loss, I do not want to see another mother experience what I have and continue to every day. Our family is choosing to live and move forward and help others as we heal. The Nicky Green Foundation will continue to reach out to communities to promote awareness and prevention of youth suicide and give youth the opportunities to feel comfortable to not be ok.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share Nicky and our family's story and thank you again for the honor of Citizen of the Year.

