



Media Contacts:

Wylie Tene/Calvin Fleming
Pallotta TeamWorks
323-342-1049/323-342-1072
wtene/cfleming@pallottateamworks.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**OVER 2400 REGISTERED (SO FAR) FOR OUT OF THE DARKNESSSM - A 26-MILE WALK TO BENEFIT THE AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION
August 17-18, 2002**

Suicide Awareness Week May 5th through 11th

May 7, 2002 – Los Angeles - The American Foundation of Suicide Prevention, sponsors of the first--ever *Out of the Darknesssm* walk, announced that over 2,400 people have registered to participate in this symbolic 26-mile journey from sunset to sunrise, from Annandale, VA to the nation's capitol. Walkers will brave the darkness and walk a marathon to raise money and awareness for **AFSP**, the only national not-for-profit organization dedicated to funding suicide prevention research, education and awareness programs. Net proceeds from the walk will fund innovative media and public awareness campaigns aimed at letting those who suffer from depression, or who contemplate suicide, know that there is help available.

National Suicide Awareness Week occurs annually in the first week of May as part of National Mental Health Month.

"Suicide is a serious problem that tends to get over-looked in our society," said Bob Gebbia, executive director of AFSP. "With events such as Out of Darkness and Suicide Awareness Week, we hope to not only raise money, but to raise awareness as well as help end the stigma associated with mental illness and suicide."

Every year, about 30,000 Americans die from suicide making it the eleventh leading cause of death among adults and the third leading cause of death for young people ages 15-24. Every eighteen minutes another life is lost to suicide. More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease combined. Out of the Darkness is a way to make a stand and show that there is help.

"I lost a cousin to suicide 23 years ago, my first wife 19 years ago and my only sister 2 years ago. I know the feelings of helplessness we have when a loved one commits suicide," said participant Bob Thomson, from Saxtons River, Vermont. "We have to instill in people that there is no terrible stigma in suicide. I truly hope my participation will help someone, either the potential victim or those left behind."

Out of the Darkness will begin Saturday evening at sundown, August 17 in Annandale, VA and end with an emotional closing ceremonies Sunday morning at dawn in Washington D.C. The goal of trekking 26 miles with lights everywhere, is to demonstrate a journey from despair to hope, from secrecy to openness and bring to light the often-overlooked problems of depression and thoughts of suicide. Walkers will join together to rid the night of the loneliness and the darkness many feel when a loved one dies from suicide.

-more-

Out of the Darkness
Page 2

In order to participate, each walker will train for the event and will raise a minimum of \$1000. To help prepare for Out of the Darkness, each walker is supported by a team of coaches who will help them in all aspects of training and fundraising, while clinics, training sessions and mailings provide ongoing support.

About American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is the only national not-for-profit organization dedicated to funding suicide prevention research, education and awareness programs — both to prevent suicides and to assist those affected by suicide. AFSP was founded in 1987 by concerned scientists, business and community leaders, and by those who have lost a loved one to suicide. Located in New York City, with 20 affiliate chapters across the country, AFSP was an integral part of former Surgeon General David Satcher's planning group for the first ever National Suicide Prevention Strategy report. Their most recent nationwide projects include a teen suicide prevention PSA campaign, the creation of the National Survivors of Suicide Day, several new treatment research projects, funding for medical and psychological grants, a recognition, referral and treatment pilot program for college students and an educational film for college students to help them recognize the signs of suicide, mood and anxiety disorders. In 2001, AFSP distributed more than one million dollars in research grants.

For more information on Out of the Darkness, to get involved or pledge financial support, please call toll-free (800) 825-1000 or visit our website at www.bethepeople.com.

###