

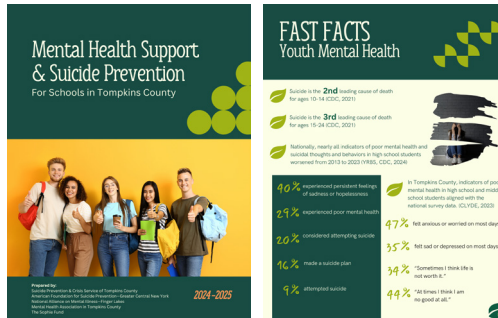
The Sophie Fund

Newsletter 2/2025



“Supporting mental health initiatives aiding young people in the greater Ithaca, New York community”

Supporting Mental Health in Tompkins County Schools



Five Ithaca-based mental health organizations including The Sophie Fund launched a new resources guide in January, “Mental Health Support & Suicide Prevention for Schools in Tompkins County.” The guide lists local support and training opportunities, and compiles toolkits to assist schools in developing mental health and bullying prevention programming as well as suicide prevention strategies.

The need for support was indicated in the results of the 2023 Community-Level Youth Development Evaluation (CLYDE) survey of Tompkins County students in grades 7-12; 47 percent said they felt anxious or worried on most days, 35 percent felt sad or depressed on most days, and 34 percent said that “sometimes I think life is not worth it.”

Other organizations behind the guide are the Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service of Tompkins County, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Greater Central New York, National Alliance on Mental Illness Finger Lakes, and Mental Health Association in Tompkins County.

To download a copy of the guide, go to: www.thesophiefund.org

Donate to The Sophie Fund

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Sun Shines on “Better Together” 2025

“Better Together for Mental Health,” the third annual community celebration marking Mental Health Awareness Month, took place in Ithaca’s Stewart Park on May 10.

More than 800 people enjoyed a day under clear blue skies filled with free meals and treats from area food favorites; carousel rides, face painting, crafts, and story times for kids; and musical acts by local bands. The Sophie Fund was among 40 Ithaca-area health and wellness organizations providing information tables for attendees.



The Sophie Fund sponsored the Family Activities Pavilion, which hosted children-focused activities including story-telling, crafts, and games. The Family Reading Partnership gave away free copies of the illustrated children’s book “How Starling Got his Speckles,” also with sponsorship from The Sophie Fund.

“All of our local mental health and many other local human service agencies come together for a common goal: to share information and resources in the effort to destigmatize mental health and help folks get equipped with the resources they need,” said Libby Demarest, director of Community Engagement at Family & Children’s Service of Ithaca.

Walking (and Running!) for Mental Health

Hundreds of Ithacans and local college students participated in spring fundraising walks to support mental health and suicide prevention.

Nearly 200 souls turned out for the walk with the Finger Lakes chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness at Ithaca's Stewart Park on May 3, bringing in more than \$34,000 for NAMI's support and education programs.



On your mark at the NAMI Finger Lakes walk

“People gather, connections are made, stories are shared, laughter resonates, and smiles are endless,” said NAMI-FL Executive Director Sandra Sorensen. “We walk to break the stigma around mental health and to bring the community together. We are very thankful for the huge impact this had.”

Approximately 200 students, staff, and faculty raised more than \$12,600 on April 13 in the third annual Cornell University campus Out of the Darkness Walk for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.



Cornellians walking to prevent suicide

“You are making a difference,” organizer Cheyanne Scholl told the participants. “You decided today that mental health and suicide prevention is an important issue and needs to be talked about.”

The Sophie Fund in the news...

As coordinator of the Tompkins County Suicide Prevention Coalition's Healthcare Work Group, The Sophie Fund on April 23 moderated a roundtable of healthcare leaders to map the suicide care pathway in the county. Twenty leaders from 13 organizations representing hospitals, campus health centers, primary care practices, behavioral health clinics, crisis responders, emergency departments, and inpatient units participated in the initiative. The Sophie Fund delivered a report compiling findings, which included responses to questionnaires, to the Coalition on May 29. The report identified a number of gaps, such as the lack of an Intensive Outpatient Program for suicidal patients.



The Sophie Fund's 2024 "Cupcake Button" fundraising campaign with Cornell University student organizations collected \$1,055.00 for the Ithaca Free Clinic. The clinic provides medical and other health services to clients regardless of their ability to pay. Participating groups included Cornell Circle K; Pre-Professional Association Towards Careers in Health (PATCH); Alpha Phi Omega Gamma Chapter; and Cornell Minds Matter: Circle K Co-Presidents Leah Goddard and Hunter Leach delivered the donation check at a Statler Hotel luncheon on March 21. "Circle K was proud to support the Ithaca Free Clinic," said Goddard. Added Leach: "We're especially thankful for the opportunity to contribute to the mission of providing compassionate, accessible healthcare."



The Cornell University student organization RISEUP and The Sophie Fund launched a social media campaign in April to promote Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. The two organizations created and posted infographics on their platforms about resources to contact for help, behaviors to recognize, plans of action, general statistics about sexual assault, and more. "By spreading awareness of the long-lasting impacts of sexual assault, we aim to reduce the widespread stigma and encourage victims to report assaults and feel comfortable enough to share their stories," said Harmony Guan, head of RISEUP'S mental health committee.



The Sophie Fund sponsored the participation of 34 Tompkins County healthcare professionals in a two-day online suicide prevention training featuring some of the nation's leading experts. "Suicide Safer Care in Clinical Practice," organized by The Wellness Institute, took place on March 19-20. The training covered treating youth suicidality, lethal means counseling, brief interventions, treatment pathways, and other topics. Since 2022, The Sophie Fund has provided free suicide prevention training through The Wellness Institute for more than 200 clinicians in Tompkins County, including the counseling center staffs of Cornell University and Ithaca College.

The Sophie Fund supported Governor Kathy Hochul's initiative to require statewide bell-to-bell restrictions on smartphones in K-12 schools. The policy will take effect for the 2025-2026 school year following its adoption by the New York State Legislature on May 12. "The governor's initiative to restrict the use of smartphones in schools is a critical step in keeping our kids focused on classwork and safer from the harms associated with digital overload in today's youth culture," said Sophie Fund Co-Founder Scott MacLeod. "We know that addictive scrolling and interactions on social media correlate with depression, anxiety, loneliness, cyberbullying, and even suicidal ideation."



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