

March 22, 2016

Jim Blasingame
The Shuchart Foundation for Mental Health Awareness

Hey Jim!

I hope you and the team enjoyed your time at Missouri State. We certainly couldn't be more grateful having you all come down and shine a light on mental illness, a topic that nobody ever wants to talk about. I think our students were very responsive, and enjoyed being able to laugh with John at something many of them are struggling with, too.

To be completely honest, I had tears in my eyes knowing that at least one person in the audience might have been saved by this presentation. One person might have realized that it is okay to be depressed, and that rising out of the Deep Dark Hole is possible. I know many of them were there for an educational credit for whatever fraternity/sorority they're in, but I truly believe that every single audience member were glad they came.

Mental illness is something I will not stop raising awareness about. Too many people--especially college students--walk around with a burden on their shoulders, thinking it is their fault they feel so low. They don't know where to turn to get help, and they don't even realize that help is possible. I have certainly felt this way, and wasted so many months weeping at the very thought of my own life. I was going to live in despair forever, so why did I need to keep going?

Catie Blake has felt this way before, too. A new friend of mine, she left my life as fast as she entered it. New to Springfield, we worked at the same restaurant and quickly bonded--I admired her confidence, and how easy it was to get along with this in-your-face kind of girl. In the short month we knew each other, we talked, we drank, and more than anything, we laughed. Which was why I was shocked to receive the news that Catie Blake took her own life on June 21st, 2015. The weeks following her death, I couldn't help but think what I could have done to prevent this.

We don't talk enough in our society. We don't talk about how we are really feeling because we don't want to be judged for it. More than anything, I want to get rid of this nasty stigma altogether, so nobody ever has to feel so alone, so completely hopeless, that their only way of relief is to take their own life. Suicide hurts everybody.

I wanted to truly thank you for the effort you all are putting forth into ending the stigma against mental illness. In a society where everybody is supposed to be leading the perfect lives, I know how difficult it is to get people talking. Your hardwork is not going unnoticed. Every single audience member was listening, and they left knowing they were not alone.

Thank you again,

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