

Verizon

Up To Speed

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided to facilitate communication accessibility. CART captioning and this realtime file may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.



Redefining Communication Access

www.acscaptions.com

[Music playing]

>> Christine: Howdy, everyone. My name is Christine Henderson. I know I'm not a familiar face you usually see here on Up To Speed. I'm a little bit more behind the scenes. My family and my mom, my dad, and my brother, I grew up in Maplewood, New Jersey, and when I was seven years old, we moved to Basking Ridge. My brother is older by three years. His name is Dave. My brother growing up was my hero, my everything. I had the most perfect childhood you could ever imagine. My parents were very big on traveling, so, as a young child, we went to Europe several times. Growing up, I was a soccer player, not good by any means. I started playing the violin when I was a young girl, and music has always been a huge part of my life.

My parents growing up had a really lovely relationship. My mother was a stay-at-home parent, and she loved the arts. She loved music. I was brought up in the church, and so I remember going to Sunday service on a weekly basis in my, you know, dress that my mother made for me, and I remember, you know, as a young girl looking up at her while she was singing and just hearing her singing on a weekly basis, and so I think that's what really, you know, connected me to music and to my mother from a very young age.

My mother, unfortunately, suffered with mental illness for a great majority of her life. I was 13 years old when my mother died by suicide. My father told me very quickly what had happened, and I -- I just remember completely starting to cry, and I rushed out of the room and downstairs, and I think -- I -- I don't know, you know, all of the emotions that were rushing through me at that point. My father shortly thereafter went to go pick up my brother from track practice, and we kind of -- I just remember us sitting in our living room and our local pastor came over just to, you know, be with us and to just sit with us, and, yeah, that was kind of... that was kind of the crappy day.

A few years after my mother passed away, when I was in high school, I started thinking about, you know, not wanting my mother's death to define the rest of my life and really wanting to make something positive of it and share my story and see how I could potentially help someone. I was a part of local groups at school that had lost a parent or a family member, and I remember speaking with them, but because my mother died by suicide, it was -- it's a

different type of death. You know, you go through the same emotions, the same grieving process, but then there's an extra pile of emotions on top of it. Part of what I struggled with when this first happened was not being able to connect to someone, not knowing anyone that had gone through a similar experience, so going through that process and starting to speak to people, when I was in high school, and starting to hear their stories, that was, you know, part of my journey, part of my healing, part of my grieving, that so benefited me. This year has been, you know, a year of firsts for many people. Many people have been trying to find a new normal, sometimes struggling to find a new normal, you know, juggling new responsibilities. Let's just remember that we should be connecting with people as much as we possibly can. We should be reaching out to our loved ones, to our colleagues, and I know for a lot of people, there is someone on their mind, you know, that they maybe haven't reached out to in a little while or, you know, someone that could use a check-in. We don't completely understand what someone is dealing with and may be going through, so that's why the importance of, you know, connecting with people and checking in on people is so much more important right now.

[Music playing]

>> Andy: Thanks to Christine, our colleague, on Up To Speed for sharing such a personal story with us, and doing it with strength, grace, and honor. As we begin to talk about September being National Suicide Prevention Awareness month, we wanted today's episode to highlight the importance of both suicide prevention and mental health, and it goes without saying, this year has been filled with surprises. We are each finding our new normal. We are juggling new responsibilities. The complexity of mental health is top of mind. So, throughout this episode, throughout this conversation, we are going to cover resources, stories that may be helping you, that may guide you or someone who you know who may be struggling right now. So let's start by talking about some of the resources. So for all of our V Teamers, EAP, our employee assistance program, is available. It allows for you to take part in five free online sessions with a counselor. You can check out helpful articles, videos, and additional resources as well, so V Teamers, make sure you check that out on VZWeb.

Now, earlier this year, we covered the news that the FCC designated 9-8-eight as the new nationwide number for the national suicide prevention line. Please continue to share this number, 1-800-273-TALK. That number is for anyone wishing to connect to the lifeline, so please continue to share that number. We have a number of volunteer platform opportunities for V Teamers as well who can offer their services to help those in need of support. So please take a look at our volunteer platform for ways that you can help give back. Back in April, Verizon Media announced that they would be donating \$10 million to advertising to support mental and public health response efforts to address the coronavirus pandemic. Now, Verizon Media also reiterated their efforts in this space by launching Yahoo Life, a website focused on physical, mental, and emotional well-being. We want to take a moment now to share the story of a V Teamer who found not only the strength to share her story but something called the Sunshine Club. She inspires hope for all of us.

>> Monica: My name is Monica Pate, and I'm the retail director for the Grand Canyon territory in Arizona. In March, I started just a normal day of work, and I got the call that I don't think any of us ever expects. My mother called and told me that my father had committed suicide. It rocked my world. My dad suffered from bipolar disorder. Even though he was struggling at times inside, he would be that person to hug you, to smile, to bring joy to you, and so he has been my hero.

We had a call maybe a month before where I felt something in his voice. I could just feel it, and it drove me to ask him, "Are you okay?" And so he did not indicate that he was going to hurt himself, but he committed one thing. He said, "If I ever do, I'll call you." And after he committed suicide, the policemen, the paramedics that were there let us know that my phone

number was up on the screen, and although his mind would not let him press send, that was his sign to me to say, "Baby girl," that's what he would call me, "I'm thinking of you, and I wanted to call you, but I couldn't this time." And so my mission is if people want to talk, if people want me to talk about it, I'm going to be there.

So I started the Sunshine Club, and it was truly just out of, hey, I'm going to spread some sunshine, and maybe others will want to hear that as well. Before I knew it, that positivity spread, and so today you'll see a lot of hash tags about the Sunshine Club. We take walks and we share funny stories or we laugh or we do Instagram live. It's really a family of people coming together. We are connecting with our company. We are connecting with our families and our friends and our communities. Because of what we have gone through, I think that will build us up to even spread more kindness across the world. So that's the challenge, V Teamers, to keep this going. When we come back into what we call this business as unusual, let's keep it unusual, meaning that we are going to connect much deeper than we ever have.

[Music playing]

>> Andy: Our thanks to Monica for sharing that story with grace, with strength, and, of course, with inspiration for all of us to not only find the sunshine in our lives but the sunshine for the people around us. So, thank you very much, Monica.

You know, the stories from our V Teamers, they showcase not only the resilience in our colleagues, but clearly this issue is one that touches lives from all walks of life. We were so fortunate to speak with Maureen Underwood. She's a LCSW and a nationally recognized expert on youth suicide prevention. She took some time to share her research, giving us insight into trends that are taking shape right now and what we should all be thinking about.

>> Maureen: There has been an increase in mental health issues because of COVID. There was a survey that was done the last week in June by the Centers for Disease Control of adults in the country, and they included 18-24-year-olds, which is important to note, because they were really worried that that group had a very high increase. And what they found was almost three times as many people reported they had anxiety this year than they did last year. The depression rates were four times higher. There was a 10% increase in people reporting substance use, and suicidal ideation went up from about 4% to almost 11%. Now, obviously, it's not a surprising thing, understanding the chronic stress we are living in right now because of COVID, and certainly one of the characteristics that's the most challenging for all of us, I think, is the uncertainty and the unpredictability. When we can't fully understand something, we can effectively problem solve it. This may be the silver lining with COVID. As a culture, we are being exposed to the importance of public health, and that's where prevention and treatment live.

>> Andy: Lots to think about there. Our thanks to Maureen Underwood for that insight, and as we wrap things up today, a reminder, just like in years past, many V Teamers are participating in the world event called Cycle Around the Globe, which is in support of World Suicide Prevention Day. For those that want to join, you can take part until the last day of September. All you need to do is track your miles and log your contribution on VZWeb.

And another reminder, please continue to share the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the number on your screen there, 1-800-273-TALK. Share that number with anyone wishing to connect to the lifeline. So, as we wrap things up, as we have been saying on Up To Speed, please continue to reach out to your loved ones and colleagues. Make sure they are okay. This is something that Christine, my colleague, does regularly, and I thank her for that, and as Christine challenged all of us in her video at the top of the show here, here is our challenge to you: Who are you going to reach out to right now? Take a moment to think about it. I'll bet someone just popped into your head. So, the challenge, again, who are you going to reach out to right now? I'll let you take it from here.