



# 2017 Annual Report

WWW.ERIKASLIGHTHOUSE.ORG



## A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As I walk through my neighborhood with my son, husband and french bulldog in tow, I often take in our little Winnemac Park ecosystem: the trees blooming in unison, a little brown bunny hopping through the brush looking for greens and vibrant butterflies floating from flower to flower doing their part to keep the system running smoothly. The birds don't ruminate over last year's migration path or worry about this season's mating strategy. Every living creature in the park goes about their business, always knowing what needs to be accomplished at any given moment and only focused on that moment. The harmony of nature is marvelous.

And then, shortly after, as we walk home I often ponder how humans have veered so far off course. We live out of balance most of our lives. We see this everywhere in our society. If you are lucky, this may look like an unsettled feeling hanging out in the background, but for many, it looks like chronic disease and destructive behavior patterns that cause deep suffering. Look closely at your life and the lives of those you love. Do they feel harmonious?

Unlike humans the rest of nature is almost always paying attention to the warning signs that something is "off" and making the necessary adjustments. After all, survival is at stake. Just look at the example of the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. Like most natural disasters, almost every non-human creature noticed the subtle shift in the environment and went to higher ground long before the first waves hit the shore.

So, what is responsible for the human imbalance crisis and why are so many of us willing to tolerate the suffering that comes with it?

The short answer: *our minds are responsible for most of our problems and the reason we tolerate it is because we believe the stories the mind is telling us.*

But, what I am here to tell you is **we are not our minds**. Our minds can and should be trained to work for us, not the other way around. What gets me out of bed every morning is the opportunity to work with an incredible team who develop tools that help

young people get back in touch with who they really are, not who their minds tell them they are; getting them back to a place where harmony, creativity and joy reside in all of us.

Erika's Lighthouse has been at the forefront of transcending teen depression. We deeply understand that in order to elevate the next generation beyond these destructive conditioned mind patterns we have to stay focused on the basics, which include:

- Creating tools to open up dialogue about depression and mental health in classrooms and in homes;
- Connecting youth to real stories of resilience and finding hope;
- Providing opportunities for teens to be a part of something bigger through peer to peer awareness campaigns and clubs;
- Placing emphasis on teaching core functions that bring our lives back into a state of balance - things like meditation, being in nature, sleep hygiene, nutrition, exercise and so on.

Everything Erika's Lighthouse strives to do and offer is simple, accessible and highly functional for our school communities. This summer we will be debuting a new website featuring a refreshed look and a rebranding of our middle school and high school classroom programs now called, *The Erika's Lighthouse Programs*. You might have also noticed that we updated our logo, which after 14 years, was long overdue. Can you find the hidden "E"?

As you take a deeper dive into this report, I hope you are filled with hope and possibility. We can't thank you enough for your loyalty, dedication and support of our shared mission to *Get Depression Out of the Dark*. If you would like to find out more about how you can get involved or make a donation, please visit our website at [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org).

Wishing you a peaceful and balanced year,

Heather Freed, LCSW  
Executive Director

## Our Team

### Board of Directors

Beth Brady  
Deedee Brannigan  
Eileen Sheehan Hovey  
Linda Monico  
Virginia Neuckranz, *Co-Founder*  
Thomas H. Neuckranz, *Co-Founder*  
Kathleen Kelly Spear  
Joshua Taustein  
Elaine Tinberg  
Barbara Bruck Williams

### Lighthouse Council

Jill Axline  
Sarah Conrad  
Dianna Devine  
Katie Gierke  
Kathleen Hooper  
Avril Klaff  
Ghita Lapidus  
Lauren Laughlin  
Fleury Linn  
Sally Lou Loveman  
Heather McPhilliamy  
Martina Mead  
Jeni Spinney  
Nancy Watson

### Professional Advisory Board

Penny Powers Beitler, *M.S., L.M.F.T.*  
Robin Bluestone-Miller  
David C. Clark, *Ph.D.*  
Dan C. Daly, *M.S.*  
Tom Golebiewski, *Ph.D., L.C.S.W.*  
Lauren Gumbiner  
Jason LaHood, *Psy.D.*  
Deborah Lazar, *M.L.S.*  
Melissa Perrin, *Psy.D.*  
Alec Ross, *L.C.S.W.*  
Father Charles Rubey, *L.C.S.W.*  
David Schreiber, *M.D.*  
Daniel Schwartz, *Ed.D.*  
Sharon Weingarten, *M.S.W., A.C.S.W.*

### Young Adult Board

Alexandra Perraud, *Co-Chair*  
James Litzow, *Co-Chair*  
Rolando Montoya-Rodriguez  
Amy Hrad  
Jesseca Hutchins  
Jessica Jones  
Benny Matthew  
Lucy Mahoney  
Andrew McCarthy  
Spencer Schiele  
Danielle Spiekhou  
Bianca Swegler

### Staff

Heather Freed, *LCSW, Executive Director*  
Kristina Kins, *Director of Outreach & Development*  
Peggy Kubert, *MA, LCSW, Director of Education*  
Jennifer Lande, *Office Administrator*  
Shira Lichtenstein, *Social Media Coordinator*

# 2017 in Numbers

## Our Impact

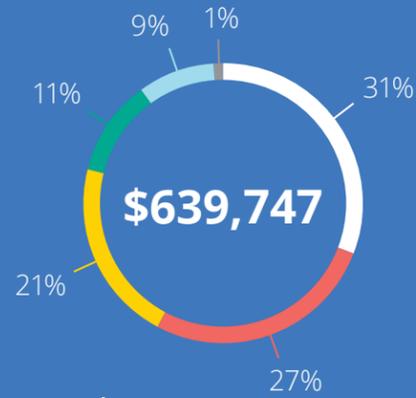
77,492  
Total teens educated

1,142  
Total adults educated

1,070  
Total general education

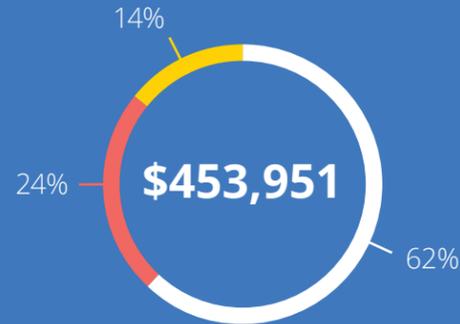
80,004  
TOTAL IMPACT

### OUR FINANCIALS



#### Income

- Fall Appeal—\$198,398
- Spring Party—\$170,664
- Donations—\$134,784, 804 individual donors
- Chicago Marathon—\$73,637
- Grants—\$57,653, 12 grants
- Other—\$4,611



#### Expenses

- Programming—\$280,823
- General & Administrative—\$107,675
- Fundraising—\$65,453

### COMMUNITIES



#### 28 Total states teaching Erika's Lighthouse programs

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin

114  
Total communities served

176  
Total schools & organizations served

78  
New school partners in 2017

### PROGRAMS

16  
Total Teen Clubs

221  
Total Erika's Lighthouse programs

6  
Total general awareness programs

18  
Total adult programs

261  
Total programs delivered

### WEBSITE



#### INCLUDING





Johnny is a mental health advocate and four-time Team Erika's Lighthouse marathoner



## HOPE GROWS HERE

# Johnny's Story

At 22 years of age, fresh out of college, I had a mental break down. Not just a temporary moment of feeling low, or a fleeting bout of sadness that goes away after a couple weeks' time – but a crisis that by all markers was a public health emergency.

It was an episode triggered by a perfect storm of factors: My sophomore year of high school I was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease – a gastrointestinal disorder in which one's immune system attacks their digestive organs – and it would test the limits of my humanity. I would spend close to a decade of my life searching for hope - struggling physically, mentally and spiritually. With a lot of help and unwavering support from loved ones, I weathered storms that would prove to be temporary. I sought professional help and went to therapy. I confronted hard truths about who I was and the nature of my reality. And finally, **I found Erika's Lighthouse.**

Through Erika's Lighthouse I have learned that our minds and bodies are profoundly healable. That I, as a young man who had never run more than 3 miles in his life, who was 40 pounds heavier, who was struggling daily with depression and suicidal thoughts, could rise above the odds and conquer some formidable obstacles.

I have learned the importance of intervention and programming. In many ways, the biggest hurdle I faced in overcoming chronic illness was the fight I had to wage against depression. Sick with no full recovery in sight, I spent years trudging through episodes of profound despair – moments of psychological pain that made the simplest of tasks feel like herculean undertakings. **I have no doubt, that had the Erika's Lighthouse programs been in my school, I would have sought help well before reaching a point of crisis.**

I have learned that the Erika's Lighthouse mission is powerful. When we make a commitment to educating our communities about teen depression and eliminating the stigma associated with mental illness, we **empower all of our teens** to talk openly about their mental health, bolstering their capacity to heal.

## TESTIMONIALS

# Our Success Stories

The videos are well done. The kids find them authentic and, because of the diversity, can see a face they recognize. The materials are affordable, well thought out and easy to use. They're flexible and have no rigidity about how they're to be used. No one is putting out these kinds of materials right now, and trying to create them on my own would be impossible.



**HARRY BROWN, MA LMFT**  
*Islander Middle School, Mercer Island Youth & Family Services Counselor, Mercer Island, WA*



We students saw a need for education on the topic of mental health and we thought that promoting a positive learning environment was necessary. One of the club leaders had heard of an awesome club from her brother who had a great experience being part of Erika's Lighthouse at another school. The club has grown to include many members, all of whom are very excited to help the cause. This is the first time Whitney Young has had a club like Erika's Lighthouse and we are excited to keep benefitting from the amazing message—we need to *Get Depression Out of the Dark.*



**CHLOE, ERIKA'S LIGHTHOUSE TEEN CLUB STUDENT**  
*Whitney Young High School, Chicago, IL*



The program is comprehensive in that it provides a thorough and scientific understanding of depression, explores and clears away the negative stigma associated with mental illness, provides guidance on how to seek help for oneself and a friend, and addresses the importance of adopting and maintaining healthy coping mechanisms to combat everyday stressors. Students share with me that they are grateful for the education, practical tools, and permission to discuss mental health issues in a way that is authentic, hopeful, and empowering.



**NANCY WATSON, LCSW, CADC**  
*Lake Forest Country Day School, Lake Forest, IL*



Erika's Lighthouse provides a personal touch to their work. Their video is the best video I've seen on depression. It doesn't feel 'made'; it seems real and relatable. It clearly sends the message that depression does not define a person.



**SHEILA APPLGATE**  
*Parent, Chicago, IL*



# Our Highlights



43 Team Erika's Lighthouse runners raised a total of \$70,753 (with 948 donors) in the Bank of America Chicago Marathon.



Erika's Lighthouse Teen Clubs are extracurricular programs in schools through which teens themselves develop initiatives to promote good mental health and break down stigma in their school. Teen Clubs are now expanding both locally and nationally and also are starting to grow into middle schools!



In Fall 2017, we launched our newest high school program, The Erika's Lighthouse Program: Depression & Suicide Awareness for High School Students, which includes a new video featuring 7 diverse young people sharing their stories.



The Erika's Lighthouse Young Adult Board held its 5th annual "Bump Out Depression" beach volleyball tournament in August and engaged many new young adults in the Erika's Lighthouse mission through various social events during the fall, winter and spring.



Erika's Lighthouse is entering its 15th year and with that has been working on a new look! We are in the process of refreshing the organization's website and also updated the logo. Keep an eye out for our new site at [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org).



The 2018 Hope Grows gala planted the seed for future growth of our programs. Our annual event raised roughly \$95,000 with 165 attendees. Thank you to all of our donors and supporters.

# Upcoming Events

## 6th Annual Bump Out Depression Beach Volleyball Tournament

"Bump Out Depression!" is our Young Adult Board's annual beach volleyball tournament benefiting Erika's Lighthouse and our mission to *Get Depression Out of the Dark*. Teams of eight to ten play in a double elimination beach volleyball tournament with fun prizes awarded to the first and second place teams. During the tournament, participants receive t-shirts and enjoy complimentary refreshments, sun and fun at North Avenue Beach in Chicago. **Join the Young Adult Board on August 25th from 10am to 1pm. To register, go to [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org) by August 1st.**

## 2018 Bank of America Chicago Marathon

For the fifth year in a row, Erika's Lighthouse has an official charity team in the Bank of America Chicago Marathon. In addition to running 26.2 miles, our marathoners have a goal to raise \$70,000 by race day. Consider making a contribution at: [erikaslighthouse.org/events-chicago-marathon](http://erikaslighthouse.org/events-chicago-marathon) or **join us on October 7th to support our 47 marathoners making strides against stigma at Chicago's most coveted race!**

## Save the Date: Celebrating 15 years of being a *Beacon of Hope for Adolescent Depression*

Erika's Lighthouse has been providing schools and communities with tools and resources for promoting positive mental health messaging since 2004. **Join us on Saturday, May 18, 2019 to recognize 15 years of Erika's Lighthouse.**



P.O. Box 616  
Winnetka, IL 60093



### WHY WE ASK FOR YOUR E-MAIL

We get it. Everyone gets inundated with e-mails. However, here at Erika's Lighthouse, we do not send more than one or two emails per month, and the information you'll receive is similar to the annual report you are reading now. Our goal is to share with you how we're spending your donations, alert you to events that we're hosting, and update you on major changes and new initiatives that happen here at Erika's Lighthouse. We promise we won't spam your inbox, and everything we send will be quality, relevant and infrequent. Thank you for understanding and adding your e-mail to our list! Please include your email the next time you make a donation, or go to [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org) and click "sign up" at the bottom of the page!



*Get Depression Out of the Dark!®*