



People & Places

ORION Foundation breaks the silence on suicide

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The ORION Foundation held an event to bring awareness to suicide on Sept. 30, the final day of Suicide Prevention Month.

The foundation was established as a tribute to the memory of Oriona "Ori" Jada Sims.

Oriona Sims' mother, Dr. Latisha Sims, said Oriona was a selfless, artistic young lady who knew how to find the beauty in everything. Ori Sims passed unexpectedly at the age of 15 on July 25, 2014.

"Ori was an ideal student with many innate artistic abilities," Sims said. "She was an upcoming sophomore in high school whose passion for music led to participation in the school choir and concert band. Ori learned to play various musical instruments: viola, trumpet, euphonium and piano (self-taught)."

Sims added that her daughter's fondness for performing arts was demonstrated in show stopping performances where she acted, sang, danced and completed gymnastics routines. Oriona Sims was a member of the winter guard at her high school, twirling flags and rifles to choreographed routines. Oriona Sims also sewed, painted, took digital photos and studied videography.

"Besides being imaginatively talented, Ori's smile, jokes and noble character confirmed her heart of gold," Sims said. "Her peaceful spirit spoke volumes to everyone who knew her. Ori's 15 years on earth were spent being an angel to her family. She was her ma's right-hand woman, she was truly daddy's little girl, her sister's confidant and her

brother's keeper. Ori had a knack for making everyone feel special and loved."

Sims said keeping her daughter's legacy alive was a main driver for establishing the memorial fund.

"Our daughter's unique mind and sincere passion for the arts led us in the direction of celebrating talent," Sims said.

The Sept. 30 presentation, titled "The Silent S," included singing, dance, prayer, a shared experience presentation from Marcus Reynolds and an education presentation from the Rev. Rodney Lockett, who is trained in suicide prevention counseling.

"Suicide. That's a very hard word for people to say," Lockett said. "It's a very tough subject for people to talk about."

Lockett said we have trouble with talking about suicide because it's something we don't know much about.

"This subject is prevalent across racial lines, economic lines, across all lines; suicide knows no race, no monetary value, no education level," Lockett said.

Lockett said the subject of suicide is close to him because he himself is a survivor of suicide.

"Back in 1993, I was about take my life," Lockett said. "My life had been falling apart. Everything I had, I had lost, and I couldn't seem to get myself back together. I couldn't talk about it because I didn't feel or understand what was going on."

Lockett said he had tunnel vision, seeing nothing but his pain. His plan was to drink some cheap liquor to get drunk before drinking Drano to end his life, but an ex-girlfriend invited him to her family's



Oriona Sims' parents, Henry Sims Jr. and Dr. Latisha Sims, served as emcees for "The Silent S" presentation.

home for Thanksgiving.

Lockett said survivors of suicide believe that killing themselves is the solution to all their problems. He used the example of a study done asking people who jump off bridges and survive why they decided to jump.

"When someone is facing suicide, it's not that they want to die," Lockett said. "They just can't handle the pain anymore. They don't see the answers anymore."

According to Lockett, there is a stigma around suicide, and society believes that people who have mental illnesses or contemplate suicide aren't strong enough.

"When you hear about somebody wanting to take their own life, that's the first red flag," Lockett said. "You should never take that as they're just saying it to get attention. When that happens, you should pause and listen to what they have to say. Ask them questions. There's a myth that if you ask somebody if they are contemplating taking their own life that it will put the idea in their head. No, it's already in their head, and it may save someone's life."



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Jordan Deshong provided an instrumental and singing performance.

Lockett also spoke about the loved ones left behind trying to figure out why their loved one or friend committed suicide.

"You may never know the reason why," Lockett said. "Even if they left a suicide note behind, that is not always the reason why because when a person is experiencing these ideas, they have tunnel vision. What they write down is not always the reason why."

"I want to urge you to be more educated, to be able to listen," Lockett said. "If you or someone you know

is having these thoughts, I urge you to seek out counseling. There are resources out there. You can get rid of the pain by getting some counseling. There are people who will walk with you through this pain, through the hurt you're going through. There are other answers. I pray that you'll be able to reach out and see the love God has for you. There are so many people who are there to help you walk out of the valley of the shadow of death."

The Thomson High School Class of 1997



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Marcus Reynolds shared his experience with the suicide of his late friend.



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The Rev. Rodney Lockett gave an informational presentation on suicide.



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Sharille La'Shaun Buoy provided a singing performance.



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Lee Antonion Buoy II provided a singing performance during the event.



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The Seraphin dancers provided a dance routine to close out the event.



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Shown are Latavia Howard, Katina Roberts, Yolanda Smalley and Mario Hixson. The women are part of an organization called The Royal Majestic Beauties, and they provide mentoring to girls age 11-19.