

Love is the movement

Rachel Lamb, *Asst. Life Editor*



Jamie Tworowski didn't expect to start an internationally known organization.

He didn't do it for fame, for praise or for monetary benefits.

The founder of To Write Love On Her Arms (TWLOHA) started the suicide prevention group to help a friend.

Tworowski, musician Eric James and TWLOHA member Denny Kolsch met with students in Slee Hall on Wednesday for a night of encouragement, music and open discussion about suicide, depression, addiction, and self-injury.

Tworowski started TWLOHA in 2006 when he met Renee, a struggling and self-injuring drug addict. The night before Renee was supposed to go to rehab, she locked herself in the bathroom and carved "F**k up" on her forearm with a razor.

The next morning, Renee was denied admission to rehab because her wounds were fresh. She was asked to return five days later when the drugs were out of her system. Tworowski and friends kept her safe and sober in those days before Renee returned to rehab.

"It wasn't a profanity issue, it was an identity issue," Tworowski said. "Renee bought into the lies and the regret and she believed that she was stuck for good."

Tworowski decided that Renee needed to know love as her true goal. And thus, the name was born.

After he met Renee, Tworowski wrote about her story. He and his friends started selling T-shirts with their slogan as a way to pay for Renee's treatment and made a MySpace page to "give it a home."

Soon after, bands like Anberlin, Switchfoot, Paramore and The Rocket Summer began promoting TWLOHA at their shows by wearing the shirts and offering opportunities to meet Tworowski. TWLOHA frequently tours with bands both in the U.S. and different countries to promote their cause.

"Music has the unique ability to ask questions and to tell us that it's okay to feel things," Tworowski said.

Wednesday's event started with an acoustic set by James, who met Tworkowski during a show where he was performing. The musician recommends music as an outlet for pain.

"Life is complicated and heavy, but it's also very good," James said to the crowd.

After James was done with his set, Kolsch came out and with tangible emotion, he told the room of his own struggle with addiction and depression. Kolsch was a heroin addict for four years before a friend was courageous enough to help him when he felt that he was alone.

"There is still an impulse today that makes me want to deal with pain alone, but we aren't meant to live life alone," Kolsch said. "We're created to be loved and have relationships and have people know us and our story."

Tworkowski, James and Kolsch offered encouragement, friendship and inspiration to everyone after the show to let them know that every person's story mattered and that love is the ultimate goal.

"I have problems letting people in and I'm learning that it's okay to ask for help from my friends and family and people who care about me," said Kyle Ginkel, a junior exercise science major who attended the event.

Other people, like Chris Boardway, a senior biological sciences major, were affected in a different way.

"I haven't personally experienced depression or thoughts of suicide, but I learned that I need to listen more closely to friends or family that may not know that I'm there for them if they need me," Boardway said.

Hundreds of students attended the event and it was clear to Thom Neill, a licensed clinical social worker, counselor at UB and coordinator of Wednesday's event that the number of e-mails he received meant that TWLOHA reached a lot of people.

"The main message that TWLOHA is trying to get across is that no matter who we are, there is overlap. We all share happiness, pain and humanity. We're all alike," Neill said.

Students seeking guidance with issues involving depression, thoughts of suicide, addiction or other emotional ailments, should contact UB Counseling Services at 645-2720.

<http://www.ubspectrum.com/article/66>