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**Suicide Prevention Action Network USA Executive Director Helps Launch  
5<sup>th</sup> World Suicide Prevention Day at United Nations**

***Jerry Reed Discusses Suicide Among Older Adults as Part of  
Conference “Suicide Prevention Across the Lifespan”***

**NEW YORK, September 10, 2007** — Jerry Reed, executive director of the Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA) today spoke at the United Nations as part of the International Association for Suicide Prevention and World Health Organization’s launch of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Suicide Prevention Day. National Suicide Prevention Week began yesterday, Sunday, Sept. 9, 2007 and runs through Saturday, Sept. 15, 2007.

“Suicide among older adults is a serious, but preventable, public health problem,” Reed said. “We must work together to do more to raise public awareness of suicide among older adults and to generate political support for policies that will help prevent suicide.”

Suicide was the cause of nearly 50 percent of all violent deaths worldwide in 2000 – with homicides next at just over 30 percent of the violent deaths globally. That is a rate of about one suicide every 40 seconds. Reed said that the highest rates of suicide are found in Eastern European countries.

Among older adults, suicide rates increase with age across the globe, Reed said. And for those over the age of 75, the rates of suicide are three times higher than among 15-24 year-olds. As the population continues to age, those rates are likely to increase.

Risk factors among older adults include depression, prior suicide attempts, physical health problems, isolation, personal losses and access to lethal means. Reed said several strategies should be used to help prevent suicide among older adults, including:

- Working closely with primary care doctors to treat depression
- Restricting access to lethal means
- Improving screening among older adults
- Increasing community outreach and training

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In addition, Reed said better data regarding suicide among older adults must be collected, programs aimed at preventing suicide among older adults must be implemented, and that best practices for suicide prevention must be identified and evaluated.

“There is some encouraging news – several states in the United States have developed older adult suicide prevention plans and the U.S. Congress is moving forward on legislation to increase suicide prevention efforts among older adults, but there is much more to be done on a global scale,” Reed said.

**NOTE: To interview Jerry Reed, please contact Collier Craft at (202) 715-1524 or [collier.craft@dittus.com](mailto:collier.craft@dittus.com).**

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*SPAN USA is the nation's only suicide prevention organization dedicated to leveraging grassroots support among suicide survivors and others to advance public policies that prevent suicide. Since its founding in 1996, SPAN USA has led the drive to make suicide a public health priority by building political will and calling for the development and implementation of a national strategy for suicide prevention. Using its extensive grassroots network of survivors and advocates, SPAN USA has actively promoted the cause on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures. For more information, please visit [www.spanusa.org](http://www.spanusa.org).*

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