

## **Bereaved family hosts teen-suicide discussion**

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They couldn't stop their son from committing suicide, but seven years later, Ginny and Kerry Dennehy are still hoping they can help save another life.

The Dennehys -- founders of the Kelty Patrick Dennehy Foundation -- joined Thursday with BC Children's Hospital Foundation to host a discussion on depression.

The event drew more than 200 youth and family members who wanted to learn how to identify and deal with mental illness and teen depression-related suicide.

"Depression really has no boundaries, it affects so many people," Ginny Dennehy said before the event. "You soon find out depression can hit anyone at any time and it's nothing to be ashamed about because it's a disease."

For the Dennehys, Thursday's gathering -- the second such event they have hosted since 2006 -- is part of a personal crusade to help educate people about the disease that led to their 17-year-old son Kelty's death in 2001.

Kelty, described as an outgoing child with lots of friends, spiralled into depression in 2000 during a family cruise to the Panama Canal. He struggled to pull himself out of his despair before hanging himself in the family's Whistler home. His father attempted vainly to rescue him.

Thursday's panel discussion underscored the need for more education and awareness of the mental illness, which still carries a huge stigma in society, said Dianne Diamond, executive director of the Kelty Patrick Dennehy Foundation.

"It's been a very closed topic and people are searching for help," she said. "We've received so many calls from people with heart-wrenching stories."

Speakers at Thursday's event included Dr. Allan Young, a psychiatrist and researcher in depression at the UBC Institute of Mental Health and Jane Garland, child psychologist and head of the mood disorder clinic at B.C. Children's Hospital.

Young, one of the world's leading researchers on depression and a pioneer in the use of brain imaging to study mental illness, chairs the University of B.C. research program to find a cure for depression.

The B.C. government in 2005 said its Leading Edge Endowment Fund would match \$2.5 million raised by the Dennehys and Heather and Lloyd Craig, whose son Gavin, 25, committed suicide after a prolonged battle with depression. Young said at the time that UBC had a strong team of scientists working toward the "common goal of solving the problems of severe mental illness and depression."

The Dennehys' foundation committed \$500,000 to the program. It also kicked in \$1 million toward BC Children's Hospital's mental health wing, which will provide more training to doctors.