

## Commander's Connection



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Shirley Henderson

**Col. Sam Angelella meets with Shaw children at the base tree-lighting ceremony at Memorial Lake Dec. 5.**

*"Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to **commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil**.*

*Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in **The Shaw Spirit**.*

**Q** I would like to suggest the yield sign at the Main Gate be relocated to the entrance road coming westbound from Highway 76/378. Many people using the overpass completely disregard the yield sign and some drivers do not look to their right at all.

**A** The yield sign is located on the parkway entrance because traffic backing up on the overpass is less hazardous than on Highway 76/378 heading west, where traffic is traveling 55 mph. All drivers are encouraged to use caution at the main gate and observe posted traffic signs. Thanks for your suggestion.

## Ripples of suicide: when pebbles drop

By Lt. Col. Carey Stegall  
Team Shaw member

The pebble hits the water and ripples begin moving outward. These are ripples of pain, influence, desensitization and culture that affect everyone around you -- your family that needs you, your co-workers and maybe a roommate.

"Why shouldn't I just end my life? What do I have to live for? Nobody cares about me. They wouldn't even notice if I was gone." A desperate feeling, an impulsive act... plop! The pebble drops.

Have you ever had thoughts like these? I don't mean "I'm having a bad day" thoughts; I mean deep-rooted thoughts of suicide. For instance, have you ever wondered what weapon to use? How about alcohol? Have you ever thought about literally drinking yourself into oblivion? It can be done -- I've seen it happen. Do you simply not care whether you live or die? "Life is nothing special, so what have I got to lose?" Taking your life may seem easy and the only option. But there are other things a person can do that don't cause an avalanche of consequences and ripples of destruction. They may not be easy, but in the end, I believe they are always better.

English Poet John Donne wrote, "No man is an island," and it's true. Donne went on to say "...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind." The choices we make affect us and those around us.

Let's take a look at some ripples caused by the choice of suicide.

There's the ripple of pain. Whether you know it or not, there are many people who care about you. Family, friends, supervisors and co-workers would feel the pain of loss if your life ended.

Then, how about the ripple of influence? Others in your situation or peer group might be emboldened by your choice, and the pain could multiply over and over. "Man, Joe just offed himself, I wonder if I'd have the guts to do that."

Finally, there's a real danger of society becoming so accustomed to suicide it just becomes a commonplace event -- a ripple of culture.

Life can be difficult to understand, so you're

not alone if you feel that way. No matter how alone you may feel, remember no one has it all figured out. Don't try to go it by yourself. There are great organizations with good programs to help people having thoughts of suicide -- the Chapel, Life Skills and off-base resources -- but a program may not be what it takes to get you through. You may need a person -- one who truly cares about you and could be a friend.

People around the world believe many different things about life, death and beyond. Television and movies count heavily on our curiosity about the meaning of life and death. Do you know what waits for you on the other side of this life? Is life so bad anything would be better, even if you don't know what it might be?

A lot of people believe in God, have some knowledge of the Bible and believe in some kind of heaven and hell. They may just acknowledge His existence or choose to worship Him in various ways and to various degrees. Some people make God a part of their life everyday with prayer and Bible reading. This may seem fanatical to you, something you'd rather not do. But, having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ has given me a sense of fulfillment and purpose by discovering what true life is all about. Life is a precious gift from God.

If you've tried everything but Jesus, I encourage you to give Him your whole heart and life. He will not let you down. In him is forgiveness, peace and joy. I understand others believe differently, and I will defend their right to believe so. But I believe Jesus is *the way, the truth and the life*. I would be selling my own faith short if I said otherwise. His words give comfort and guidance.

So before you give up, call someone -- a friend, co-worker or loved one. If you don't have someone like that, call me. It doesn't matter who I am or who you think I might be. What matters is people caring about people; airmen helping airmen. My phone number is in the book. Together, we might just create ripples of love and victory, mental restoration, peace and the power to overcome. These ripples can continue forever because we're both still here to make them over and over again.

## The Shaw Spirit

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