



## Bridge Rail Foundation Newsletter

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### Stop the Suicides at the Golden Gate Bridge

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### Funding the GGB Suicide Net--First Steps Forward



California Assemblyman Tom Ammiano recently called together a working group of suicide barrier advocates and bridge officials to develop a coordinated push to fund construction of a safety net on the Golden Gate Bridge. Representing the GGB District were President Al Boro, first vice-president Janet Reilly, Dick Grosboll and Chief Engineer Denis Mulligan. Five BRF representatives were in attendance--including President Dave Hull--as well as representatives from San Francisco Suicide Prevention and the Psychiatric Foundation.

Ammiano began the meeting and reported on the strong support our efforts have within the Bay Area delegation in the state assembly and senate. The discussion then focused on the need to keep all funding options open until the total needed is secured. As such, we will pursue both state and federal sources and legislation will also be introduced at the state level. We also discussed private fundraising and agreed that it could make a contribution, however donations are not likely to be a primary funding source.

The meeting concluded with an agreement to approach federal officials within the next week and establishment of a subcommittee to pursue that approach. Stay tuned. . .

### GGB Death Toll in 08-- At Least 34



Marin County Coroner and BRF board member Ken Holmes released the Golden Gate Bridge suicide death toll for 2008 earlier this month. USCG recovered twenty bodies in the Bay and two bodies were recovered in other counties. In addition, with the cooperation of bridge officials this year, 12 individuals were identified as bridge suicides, although no body was recovered.

Holmes noted that the total deaths could be higher. Remains consistent with a Golden Gate suicide have been found in other counties, however these deaths cannot be conclusively linked to the bridge. GGB officials also reported that 60 individuals were stopped at the bridge with the intent to commit suicide.

### Whose Shoes? Exhibit to Expand



Following the successful presentation of our **Whose Shoes?** display at Crissy Field last year, the BRF board voted recently to pursue expanded exhibit opportunities.

The **Whose Shoes?** exhibit is a powerful demonstration of the extent of the suicide problem at the Gate. It features hundreds of empty shoes that depict the varied occupations of individuals lost to suicide at the bridge. Shoes for the display were donated by supporters from throughout the Bay Area and include pairs of shoes brought to the exhibit by survivor family members. Some of these shoes come with small memorials to lost loved ones. **Whose Shoes?** presents in very real terms, the continuing human impact of suicide on survivor families.

Our first presentation this year is set for the Thoreau Center in the Presidio and is described below. Additional presentations are anticipated for public spaces in the Bay Area, suicide prevention centers in several counties and a number of public gatherings. Suggestions are most welcome--in fact the original idea for this exhibit grows from a suggestion made by a BRF supporter in Washington DC. If you have an idea or suggestion for an exhibit location, or want to assist with the project, please let us know, just [Click Here](#).

### December Fundraising a Success

In response to the appeal by Kevin Hines, December of 2008 was our most successful fundraising ever. Bridge Rail Foundation enters 2009 with our basic expenses covered (in case you had not guessed, we are still an all volunteer organization).

Based on this success and the success of the **Whose Shoes?** exhibit the BRF board is now seeking to greatly expand advocacy and public education efforts. Our belief is that we must redouble our efforts as a substantial proportion of the public still does not understand the need for and value of a safety net at the GGB. So while our December efforts were quite successful— the task before us remains daunting.

As such, we invite you to . . .

### Join Us March 5th

A special evening is set to showcase the **Whose Shoes?** exhibit. We invite you to join us and learn how you can help us bring this vital message to many more in our community. Here are the details:

Thursday March 5, 2009  
7 - 9 PM  
Thoreau Center for Sustainability,  
Presidio—Building 1014  
Lincoln Blvd. & Torney Ave.  
San Francisco.

Light refreshments will be served

To RSVP by email [Click Here](#)

### Exhibit to Run February 19 to April 16

The **Whose Shoes?** presentation will be in the Presidio for a two month run starting February 19. The display can be viewed during normal business hours in the Thoreau Center for Sustainability, as indicated on the map to the left.

### A National Bridge Suicide Problem?



Over the last several months we have become aware of the extent of bridge suicides throughout the country. As we reported last year, officials in Washington state are moving forward aggressively to stop suicides on a problem bridge up north. In addition, law enforcement and mental health advocates in Southern California have worked with CalTrans to resolve a problem in Santa Barbara County. It turns out there are many other problem bridges around the US. Concerned citizens in Ohio have approached us; the New York DOT has begun a review of several problem bridges in that state and press coverage has identified additional problems in Florida and Minnesota.

No doubt this list is not complete--perhaps you can help us develop more complete data. If so, send us the details including the name and location of the bridge and any information you may have on the extent of the problem. [Click Here](#) for an email link.