

Shaun Peterson's Testimonial

I've always enjoyed the outdoors and I've always spent time in the outdoors with my family and friends. Every year in the fall you could count on me, my brother, my dad, my uncle and my two "adopted" uncles Mark and Rick being at deer camp. This has been a yearly tradition for me since I was old enough to walk. The time we all spent together has been some of my best memories of my life. I can't tell you how strong the bond is that the group of us formed. While I may not see some of these fellas for an entire year when we meet up at camp it's like we never missed a beat.

I say that Mark and Rick are my "adopted" uncles because technically I'm not related to them, but I've known them both my entire life and I consider them family. Unfortunately, Rick chose to take his own life in October of 2010. I'll never forget the day, I'd just finished watching a little league football game and was driving home when my dad called I answered the phone with sarcasm and said "What do you want now dad?" He could barely get the words out, he said "Shaun, Rick's dead he killed himself." It felt like my world stopped, I remember pulling my car to the side of the road and screaming at my dad "No, No, No, No, why?!?!" I'll never know exactly why Rick took the actions that he did. I did know he was going through some struggles in his personal life, but never noticed any signs that he might take his own life. I still wish to this day that I would have taken the initiative to ask him if he was ok and if he needed someone to talk to. I can't help to think that may have changed his outlook and given him more hope.

I think about Rick all the time, especially when hunting season comes around and I see his trophy deer displayed on the cabin wall and his favorite ash tray sitting on the poker table. He was the type of person that looked out for others and was always talking us out of a risky 4-wheeler ride or a dangerous situation we all thought was a good idea. Whenever we were out on the trails he insisted on being the last person in line, I know he did that because if someone did get into trouble he would eventually reach them and help out. If I could say something to Rick now I'd tell him you'll always be with me Ricky, I love you and miss you more than you'll ever know.

I think that not just losing someone you love to suicide, but not being able to know why or what could have been done to prevent the action are the toughest questions that go unanswered. When I look at it Rick is a big reason I'm so proud to be a part of Livastride. Our events and how we use our resources are all aimed to prevent actions like those taken by Rick. We may never know it for certain, but even if we prevent just one person from making suicide their choice then all our efforts are worth it.