



Attitudes in Reverse®
PO Box 3127
Princeton, NJ 08543
www.attitudesinreverse.org

Co-Founders Tricia and Kurt Baker
609-945-3200
tricia@air.ngo
kurt@air.ngo

**Attitudes In Reverse® Perseveres in Life-Saving Mission, Honors
Compassionate Leaders at 6th Annual Taste of Hope Event**
September 4-10, 2022 is Suicide Prevention Week

PRINCETON, NJ, September 7, 2022 – “It’s so important to educate young students about mental health because problems can show up early. We need to show kids there are resources and develop their self-advocacy.”

Such a profound statement might be expected from an adult and certainly, many adults would agree with it. However, this message was expressed by a high school student during a recent suicide prevention conference that Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR®) presented in partnership with the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies. AIR empowers students to speak up about their mental health through all of its programs, most of which are educational presentations for students, tailored for different age groups from elementary school through college. As AIR strives to communicate a message of hope to everyone, another major initiative is the annual Taste of Hope event, during which AIR honors compassionate leaders who share this vital mission. Honorees at the sixth annual Taste of Hope are Larry Bailin, Founder, President and CEO, Single Throw Marketing; Ricardo Almeida, Founder, Ricardo Almeida Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Academy; and Erin Popolo, Community Student Advocate. This event will take place on October 12, 2022 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Princeton Marriott at Forrester, Princeton, New Jersey.

“Suicide rates among youth and adults have been increasing for years and for every suicide death, there are at least five attempts. The rise in suicide attempts and deaths was even greater throughout many age groups and most pronounced among youth and young adults since the pandemic began,” said Tricia Baker, CPDT-KA, Co-Founder of AIR. “We are losing far too many people – even one is too many – and education starting at an early age is essential for reversing this horrifying trend.”

“Stigma is the most common reason people don’t seek help for mental health difficulties. We have been determined to eliminate stigma since we experienced it ourselves beginning immediately after we lost our son to suicide in 2009,” added Kurt Baker, CFP®, Co-Founder of AIR. “We are tremendously grateful for the support of our honorees and volunteers. They are enabling us to expand our reach to save more lives.”

To date, AIR has educated more than 150,000 students, as well as numerous adult audiences, and is achieving its goal of saving lives, as students and others who attended AIR's presentations have attested. This year's Taste of Hope honorees have also expressed the value of AIR and their commitment to join in AIR's mission.

"I'm so glad I was introduced to the organization and the wonderful work they do. I have experienced firsthand the devastating effects mental health issues have on teens, and I've seen how animals have been used to help and bring joy to patients. So, this is a cause I am happy to support," Bailin said, referring to certified therapy dogs – many of whom Tricia Baker and her daughter Katelyn trained – who attend all AIR presentations and have instinctively encouraged students and other attendees to open up about their mental health struggles.

"Our mental health is not what we once thought. There is a lot more help needed than we once thought. An initiative like AIR is ahead of its time," Almeida commented.

"AIR's past and present impact has been amazing. The proof is the number of schools reaching out to get Tricia, the dogs and the programs into schools," Popolo said, "It's apparent how needed AIR's message is, and I want to help them grow and bring this message to a bigger audience," Popolo added.

Bailin and Almeida will be honored as *Champions of Hope* and Popolo will be recognized as a *Partner in Hope* during the Taste of Hope event on October 12th. This yearly banquet reinforces a community of understanding, kindness and empathy through mental health education and awareness.

AIR is grateful for the sponsors of this year's event: *AIR Sponsor* – Connell Company; *Faith Sponsor* – Structure Tone; *Dignity Sponsors* – Pay Day/David Freid, Sharp Home Electronics Company of America; and *Love Sponsors* – Aetna Better Health of NJ; Hinkle, Prior & Fischer Attorneys at Law; J. Robert Bratman, Esq.; JAG ONE Physical Therapy; Silas Baker, Jr.; Stark & Stark Attorneys at Law; Szaferman Lakind Attorneys at Law; Lakeland Bank; The Milan Family Foundation, Inc.; and Vito and Marlene Sisti.

Participating restaurants and dessert, wine and spirit vendors are Antimo's Italian Kitchen, Carella's Chocolates, CATB Liquor Imports, Crown of India, De Lorenzo's Tomato Pies, Iron & Ivy at Princeton Marriott at Forrestal, Local Greek, McCaffrey's Food Market, Outback Steakhouse, P.F. Chang's, Public Wines, Beer & Spirits, Plush Vodka, Seasons 52, Starbucks and Texas Roadhouse.

To register to attend the Taste of Hope event or make a donation, please visit www.toh.ngo.

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Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR®) was established by Tricia, Kurt and Katelyn Baker of Plainsboro, NJ, in 2010, soon after their son/brother Kenny died by suicide following a long battle against severe depression and anxiety. Their mission is to save lives by educating students about mental health, related disorders and suicide prevention. Since January 2011, they have presented to more than 150,000 students in elementary, middle and high schools and colleges in New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Missouri, Texas and Arizona. AIR also offers Youth Mental Health First Aid instruction and includes the AIR Dogs: Paws for MindsSM program, bringing dogs into schools to help students de-stress and engage in the conversation about mental health. In addition, AIR trains and certifies Emotional Support Animals and offers a lunch-and-learn program for businesses. For more information about AIR, please visit www.air.ngo or call 609-945-3200.

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