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ABOUT THIS BLOG

The Daily Nightly began on May 31, 2005. As Brian wrote in his first post it aims to provide a narrative of the broadcast day and a window into the editorial process at NBC Nightly News. Brian weighs in every weekday and NBC News correspondents and producers post regularly.

Brian Williams became the seventh anchor and managing editor in the history of NBC Nightly News on December 2, 2004. Read his full biography.

TO WRITE LOVE ON HER ARMS

Posted: Friday, September 12, 2008 3:30 PM by Daily Nightly Editor

By Kerri Forrest, NBC News producer

For me, the To Write Love On Her Arms story began as a little blurb in an indie music magazine. It was in a 2x4 box at the bottom of a page - if you weren't reading cover-to-cover you would have missed it.

I'm glad that I didn't.

Over the months from discovery to air, I have had a chance to meet some incredible people who have managed to take their own experiences and turn that into a community of help that reaches kids everywhere.

To Write Love on Her Arms (TWLOHA) is an online community on the social networking site MySpace. Its goal is to provide a safe place for teens and young adults to share their problems and to find help dealing with depression, alcohol and substance abuse. The community grew as word spread about the story of a young woman's struggle to overcome addiction and the friends who reached out to help her.

21-year-old Renee Yohe is beautiful, lively, and funny. She's instantly engaging and you wouldn't know that this bubbly young woman cracking jokes and playing with the stray cat that walked up while we were interviewing had been through hell.

Renee dealt with depression at a very young age and cut herself to take the

focus away from the feelings inside of her. Later the depression and cutting led to drug and alcohol abuse and she was "constantly running" from the fear and the issues and the feelings that were causing her to self-destruct. She attributes her recovery to her friends and her own belief that there was much more for her life if she could just break the cycle.

Renee has two tattoos: one, which we show in the story, is a rose that covers up the worse of her self inflicted cuts; the second is a rendition of a painting by the rock artist Michael Goddard, a portrait of his daughter, who died battling cancer, holding a rose. "In spite of all the odds against her ... she was still fighting", Renee said. "It just it really hit home for me just the idea of the odds being against me and having felt that I'd lost so much but there was still hope and still something worth fighting for that even if I was just barely hanging on."

So Renee went to rehab, and she agreed to let Jamie Tworkowski write her story.

Jamie is an old soul in a 28-year-old body. When we arrived he was negotiating TWLOHA's latest accomplishment - getting t-shirts placed in Hot Topic stores nationwide. He has the presence of someone who has been in business for 20 years, not a former regional sales rep for a surf apparel company who's been running a non-profit for two.

Jamie met Renee through their friend David McKenna. He was renting a room from McKenna at the time Renee decided to go back to rehab and during those 5 days in McKenna's home" running the coolest rehab in the world" Jamie decided Renee's story needed to be shared.

" I just wanted not to forget this experience for myself and didn't know where it would go or what it would look like but had a sense that other people would be moved by this as well."

Well, to date over 267,000 people have been moved by Renee's story and the To Write Love On Her Arms organization.

When you read the comments on the site you realize that there are a lot of teens and young adults who are having trouble coping. They're confronted with so much these days that it can feel like no one understands. But TWLOHA understands and has built a community around letting these young adults

know that they're not alone.

When I first found this story I kept saying, "these guys have done SO much to be SO young". I asked Jamie if he ever feels overwhelmed by the enormity of it, friends on MySpace, the fundraising, the speaking engagements, and the concerts TWLOHA is now associated with like The Warped Tour and Switchfoot.

Jamie said yes and no. "I never grew up wanting to run a non profit so in a sense we didn't read the rule book, we didn't know what was there and I think we've gone at it a different way based on the things that we loved, based on music and pop culture and things that our generation is interested in."

Jamie, Renee and the TWLOHA family have watched this community explode. Everyone I've told the story to along the way has been impressed and inspired with what some really amazing 20-somethings have been able to do to help others.

If you want more information on To Write Love On Her Arms go www.myspace.com/towriteloveonherarms or www.twloha.com