



## ***Meet Board Member Mike Erickson***

*When did you join the board?*

I joined the Board in 2010



*Why did you join?*

When my son died by suicide in 2007, some friends from my church had SAVE send a grief support package to me. I will never forget the words that introduced the booklet SUICIDE: Coping with the Loss of a Friend or Loved One; “You may not feel like it now but the worst has already happened”. It went on to say, “there may be times when you think you can’t make it through, but you will”. Now, over thirteen years on I still refer to that booklet occasionally knowing that in the early days, without it, I may not have made it. I think all, but certainly most of us that are called ‘suicide survivors’ want to do everything we can to ensure no other parent, spouse, sibling, or child has to go through the complicated grief we navigate every day and that’s why I chose to join the board.

*What skills do you bring to the board?*

I think most significantly is the ability to empathize with folks who are in the most vulnerable position they have ever been in. I facilitate a suicide survivors support group in the north metro every week and I have learned that while every grief journey is unique, there are some things that are common. Bringing that experience to the board is a value add. Most of my adult life I have been a member of, or led design teams focused on finding solutions to complex systems problems. I think the discipline that comes with the design process helps in an environment where we know a lot but realize we still have so much more to learn. Finally, I am a Navy veteran, having retired after thirty years of combined active/reserve service. That experience provides a military/veterans perspective to SAVEs mission.

*What do you most like about serving on the board?*

It gives me the opportunity to be a part of an organization with a critical and vital mission, to help guide an organization that is globally recognized for its work in suicide prevention and led by an icon in the field, Dr. Dan Reidenberg, also globally recognized as an expert in suicide prevention. But most importantly, it allows me to do what I can to ensure no other parent, spouse, sibling, or child has to endure a loss by suicide. I will end with an anecdote from a suicide prevention presentation I gave to a bunch of sailors – at the end of the presentation an officer, his eyes a little puffy, came up to me and thanked me for sharing my story. He shared with me that he had been concerned about his teenage son but based on the information SAVE included in that presentation he was going home to have what he knew would be a more effective conversation with his son. What’s not to lie about that?