



## **Boston-Area Author Wins Prestigious National Mental Health Award**

*Local Woman Honored for Fighting Stigma of Depression*

Four years ago on Christmas Day, Terry L. Wise attempted to take her own life. Her survival still remains a medical mystery. Throughout the years that followed, this Boston-area native not only overcame her depression, but also has become a crusader for people struggling with depression who are silenced by the isolation and stigma that nearly took her life. For sharing her deeply personal story of depression and triumph, and for proving that one's voice can be the most powerful tool for recovery, this author and international public speaker has been honored by an independent panel of national mental health leaders with the 2005 *Welcome Back Award* for destigmatization. Eli Lilly and Company sponsors the national awards program, which is in its seventh year.

A former trial attorney, Wise's life was transformed when her husband was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease, a terminal neurodegenerative illness. During four years of intensive caregiving, she watched her husband slowly become trapped inside a motionless, paralyzed body. A widow at 35, the depression that Wise had long suppressed suddenly came to the forefront.

During her recovery process, Wise wrote *Waking Up: Climbing Through The Darkness*, a memoir of her suicide attempt and a behind closed doors look at the process of recovering from depression. She keeps letters written to her by readers of the book, as well as by the many people moved by her public speaking appearances, in a binder labeled "Words to the Wise Binder," which she reads whenever she needs inspiration, courage or hope.

“The stigma of my depression and suicide attempt was almost lethal,” says Wise. “I was embarrassed of seeming weak. In reality, talking about depression only makes people, their relationships and their ability to recover stronger.”

In order to educate as many as she can about depression and the divisive and harmful effects of stigma, this deeply private woman regularly steps out of her comfort zone to share her story with diverse audiences around the country. Wise has been the keynote speaker at major national and international conferences. She is an instructor for seminars to educate health professionals and has spoken to university students, people with depression, caregivers, suicide prevention groups and spiritual leaders. Her message is simple - stigma forces people with depression to be alone with their pain and sadness at a time when being able to reach out for help would make their recovery more accessible.

“Ms. Wise’s commitment to stamping out stigma and educating others about depression is a great example of what a difference one person can make,” says Sue Bergeson, vice president of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. “She has poured her energies into educating anyone who will listen about depression, and many thousands have benefited from hearing her story.”

Wise is one of six individuals who will be honored at the seventh annual *Welcome Back Awards* ceremony on May 21, in Atlanta. Sponsored by Lilly, the *Welcome Back Awards* is a national program that recognizes outstanding individuals who make a difference in the depression community. In addition to her award, a \$10,000 contribution from Lilly will be donated to The American Association of Suicidology on Ms. Wise’s behalf.

Nominations for the 2006 *Lilly Welcome Back Awards* may be submitted by anyone wishing to recognize an individual for outstanding achievements within the depression community. For more information, call 800-463-6440 or visit [www.welcomebackawards.com](http://www.welcomebackawards.com).

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