



## Bridge Rail Foundation Newsletter

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### Raise the Rail—Stop the Suicides

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### Saturday Sept. 27—BRF *Whose Shoes?* Exhibit at AFSP Walk Out of Darkness



To dramatize the extent of death at the Golden Gate Bridge, this year's AFSP Walk Out of Darkness at Crissy Field will feature 1,300 shoes and boots stacked together symbolizing the confirmed suicides at the bridge. BRF volunteers are organizing the display and will be at the walk at the invitation of AFSP and local organizers.

The annual AFSP fundraiser is **Saturday, September 27**. Registration starts at 8:30 am while the walk starts at 10 am and concludes at noon. There will be several speakers—including Marin Coroner and BRF Board Member, Ken Holmes as the keynote speaker.

To sign up for the AFSP Walk and get all the details [Click Here](#).

BRF volunteer Joanie Boyle is coordinating our participation—and collecting shoes for the display. If you can help, [Click Here](#) to sent her a note. And, yes, we need donations of shoes!

### Action Item—Update GGB on the Suicide Count

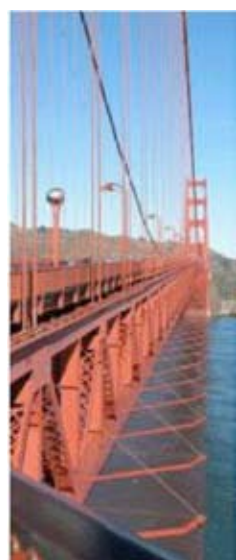
Each meeting of the GGB board features a brief period of open public comment, and we plan to have something to say at most every future board meeting. A number of our supporters have been to the last several meetings with specifics on barrier proposals and the loss of friends or loved ones. At one meeting we noticed the board receives a regular operations report—stating the number of tolls paid, bus ridership and the like.

It's time they also got a regular update on the death count—so BRF volunteers will now tell them. We have a project coordinator and ask for volunteers join us to make reports to GGB. [Click Here](#) to join the volunteer corps or for more information.

*At left--the most popular of the "build" alternatives-- an addition to the current railing to prevent suicides from the bridge.*

### A Narrow Victory at the Polls

The on line poll run by the bridge district is closed and we succeeded in beating back the "no build" option—but just barely. Final numbers indicate, "build something" squeaked ahead at the end and prevailed with 50.13% of the tally.



Many of our supporters are disappointed in this thin victory, but things started much worse and we owe all our supporters and friends a **big thank you** for their work turning this "vote" around.

When the poll first opened, 73% of the response was "no build". Complicating matters the SF Chronicle ran the engineering sketches as the story graphics, rather than the photo realistic images used by all other media. The engineering sketches present a stark image, lacking the detail and context the photo realistic graphics provide.

But our supporters responded—including readers of this newsletter, our Facebook friends, survivor family members—including families who have not been public and active before—mental health professionals and suicide prevention groups. New supporters joined as well—particularly from within the religious communities. In the end we succeeded in blunting the opposition—and squeaking by with a narrow victory.

*At left--the second most popular of the "build" alternatives-- a net to prevent suicides from the bridge.*

### On Line Petition a Success

BRF board member Dayna Whitmer presented to the GGB Board the results of an on line petition her family sponsored. Over 460 signatures poured in from throughout the area plus 34 US states and 15 different nations.



International support from Canada and Switzerland might be expected, since both nations have had success in stopping bridge suicides with barriers or nets. And interest in the UK was high since their press carried the story of a British woman who jumped from the Golden Gate this spring. But we also saw support from Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Asia and Africa. The world is indeed watching.

The initial petition was so successful that Dayna has posted a **new follow-up petition**.

### A Strong Showing This Summer

People who want suicides stopped on the Golden Gate Bridge had a strong showing this summer.

Two public meetings called by the bridge district to discuss the barrier and net alternatives featured many of our supporters at each event. Survivor families, mental health activists and other supporters showed up at each meeting. Suicide prevention organizations were well represented, including:



- San Francisco Suicide Prevention
- Suicide Prevention and Community Counseling of Marin
- Crisis Support Services of Alameda County
- Contra Costa Crisis Center
- Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center in Los Angeles

National support was evident as well. Ten organizations including The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) and the American Psychiatric Association signed a letter pointing to the need for a suicide barrier.

Finally, by the close of the comment period, **editorial support** for a taller railing or net was expressed by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *Marin Independent Journal*.

### What's Next?

Following the close of public comments, the bridge staff is reviewing the input. They will then make a recommendation to the GGB Board in late October. We expect that meeting will be crucial in the effort to finally stop the suicides at the Golden Gate. BRF will have more details as they become available--look for information on this meeting in our next newsletter or special bulletin.

### The Mayor's Office Opposes Physical Barriers

During the AFSP comment period SF Mayor Gavin Newsom announced he would ask the SF Planning Department to look into the GGB suicide issue and make recommendations. Planning called together a committee of architects and engineers, met with bridge officials—and no one else—and issued a "no build" recommendation. They propose to stop the suicides with "more staff". Perhaps a good sound bite, but this recommendation is far beyond the realm of practicality.

Patrol staff simply cannot respond fast enough--unless the district were to station 30-40 officers on the bridge (twice that when both walkways are open). And additional patrol staff is just as likely as the current staff to find themselves distracted from suicide prevention with purse snatchings, bike accidents and Tibetan independence demonstrations.

As a recent **Chronicle editorial** said about increased walkway patrols as a substitute for a barrier "That won't cut it". Indeed.

### Help Us Fight to Raise the Rail

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