

BOOKS WORTH READING

A Young Woman Learns To Begin Again

(NAPSA)—For many people, suicide is seen largely as a dramatic device in books and film, or as a blaze-of-glory exit for troubled celebrities. But this act of desperation is, first and foremost, an unthinkable tragedy that leaves loved ones to pick up the pieces and others to question why.

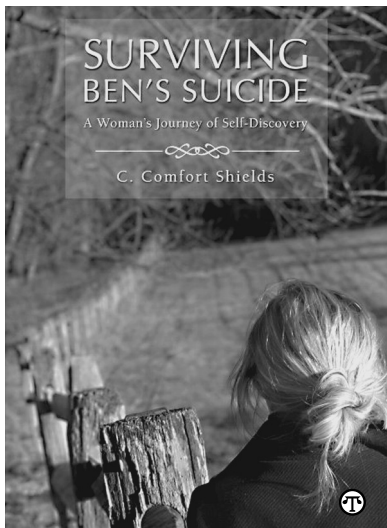
Yet in the U.S., suicide is far more common than most people realize. More than 32,000 Americans die by their own hand each year—50 percent more than die by homicide. Many of those who attempt (or succeed at) suicide are teenagers and college students; in this country, a teen commits suicide every 100 minutes. And taking one's own life is the second-leading cause of death among college students.

One such student was a young man named Ben who, in early July 1993, drove himself from Washington, D.C., to Lubec, Maine—the easternmost point of the United States. There, surrounded by rock cliffs and thick evergreen forests, Ben shot himself in the head.

While this violent act was the end of Ben's journey—and the culmination of his struggles with bipolar disorder—it became the crossroads for another, his girlfriend of 1½ years. It has taken that woman, Comfort Shields, nearly 15 years to make peace with the death of her first love.

Shields recounts Ben's tragic tale—along with her innermost thoughts and the raw, fragile feelings that followed in the wake of his death—in "Surviving Ben's Suicide" (iUniverse), a life-affirming story about overcoming pain and loss.

While searching for answers to Ben's death and her place in his life, Shields also undertook an



Fifteen years after an unspeakable tragedy, a woman addresses the death of a loved one.

intensely intimate voyage, which affirmed the endurance of the human spirit. She intentionally chose not to keep separate the past from the present, life from death, memories from dreams.

"My boyfriend's death so thoroughly permeated every moment, as well as every area of my life," shares Shields. "Ben's life as well as surviving his death, influences everything I do and who I am."

In her book, Shields addresses the statistics behind the tragic trend of suicide, as well as the effect of bipolar disorder on loved ones. She also works to break the silence about suicide, encouraging those affected by another's death to seek out the help they need, rather than trying to quietly endure their personal misery.

"Surviving Ben's Suicide" is available wherever books are sold, including www.amazon.com, www.comfortshields.com and www.iUniverse.com.