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## **Mental Health Groups Sign Open Letter to Advertising Community**

February 26, 2007 — The following is an open letter to advertisers and a list of signatories:

In the last several weeks, television advertisements from two major automotive companies have made light of suicide to sell consumers their products. These ads were both insensitive and potentially dangerous. In response to outrage expressed by our organizations and others, these corporations reevaluated their new ads, determined them inappropriate and pulled them off the air.

We thank General Motors and Volkswagen for this show of sensitivity and responsibility. We urge other corporations and advertisers to follow their leadership and avoid exploiting mental illness and/or suicide in their advertisements.

Each year, suicide claims the life of more than 30,000 people in the United States. That is twice as many people lost to homicide. Ninety percent of suicides are attributable to untreated or mistreated mental health conditions.

Mental illnesses can happen to anyone. In fact, over 60 million Americans live with these illnesses each year – with more than half going without the treatment and care they need. We know that without treatment, these people are at risk of many other serious problems – including suicide.

We feel that the children, adults and families living with a mental illness in this country deserve compassion. They deserve to live a life without shame. They deserve access to treatment and support. Without these, we cannot begin to prevent the 30,000 tragic suicides each year, and we cannot ensure people more productive, healthier lives.

Suicide and mental illnesses are no laughing matters. As our nation's leading mental health organizations dedicated to reducing the stigma and shame associated with mental illnesses and preventing suicide, we challenge advertisers to appreciate the seriousness of mental illnesses and treat them as you would any other major illness.

We ask you for sensitivity and compassion and we welcome the opportunity to work with advertisers toward this goal.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)  
American Psychiatric Association – [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)  
Mental Health America – [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)  
National Alliance on Mental Illness – [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

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