



## National Organizations Urge Volkswagen to Pull Ad

### *Ad Contributes to Stigma and Misconceptions about Mental Illness and Suicide*

February 14, 2007 – Less than a week after General Motors agreed to edit its advertisement featuring a robot who gets laid off and then jumps off a bridge, yet another automobile company has decided to use suicide as a marketing tool. Volkswagen launched a new three-spot advertising campaign, including one ad called “*Jumper*” that shows a man on a ledge contemplating suicide, who then changes his mind after a stranger drives by and tells him about the new VWs under \$17,000.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), American Psychiatric Association (APA), Mental Health America (MHA), and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) have joined together to urge that Volkswagen to pull this ad and encourage the company to act responsibly, just as General Motors did last week.

As national organizations dedicated to improving the lives of people living with depression and other mental illnesses and to preventing suicide, we are extremely disappointed that Volkswagen would proceed with this offensive ad that uses suicide and mental illness to sell cars. Stigma continues to shroud suicide and mental illness in our society. Media portrayals, such as this ad, further trivialize the underlying illnesses that can lead to suicide and perpetuate this stigma. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 57 million people live with a mental illnesses and this ad makes light of this issue.

Suicide is a national health problem that claimed 300,000 lives in past 10 years in the United States and there are more than one million suicide attempts each year. It is the fourth leading cause of death among adults aged 18–65 and the third leading cause of death among our youth aged 15–24. The leading cause of suicide is depression, a serious illness that affects 20 million people in the United States each year.

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