



# THE SEAN COSTELLO MEMORIAL FUND FOR BIPOLAR RESEARCH



THE SEAN COSTELLO  
MEMORIAL FUND FOR  
BIPOLAR RESEARCH  
BENEFIT CONCERT

## A Year Has Passed

It has been a year since Sean passed and the consequent inception of the Sean Costello Memorial Fund for Bipolar Research. The form that the Fund would take was vague for many reasons: the primary being the unexpected passing of Sean and the recognition of what we did not know to be able to save him. What I did know was that Sean suffered and died as a consequence of a disease that was treated ineffectively. Sean owned his problems and sought help from many people, but effective help eluded him. When I founded his memorial fund, I knew that he must not have been alone in his struggle. I had no idea how prevalent his issues were and the ground swell of support that would come our way.



PAUL LINDEN



OLIVER WOOD



JON LIEBMAN

During this year, despite the shock and grief of Sean's passing, much has been accomplished. Most of this progress is attributable to his unbelievable network of friends and fans. In less than a year, there were no fewer than 5 memorial concerts. We were designated a 501(c)(3) corporation by the IRS, making us eligible for matching funds as a not-for-profit organization, and, we have raised over \$20,000 much of it from individual contributions from people who were touched by Sean or our cause. We even had an article written about us in the June/July issue of Blues Revue!

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**YOU TOUCHED MY HEART,  
SEAN, WITH YOUR SOUL AND  
YOUR MUSIC. I WILL MISS YOU  
AS LONG AS I LIVE."  
- UNKNOWN, SPRINGFIELD, IL.**

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Intrinsic to our success is a clear mission with goals and objectives. While our core mission remains stable: funding ways to help musicians with bipolar disorder get effective treatment while supporting early diagnosis, education and research, our goals are organic, evolving as we garner information. Though our fundraising efforts have been overwhelmingly successful for such a young organization, our reserves are clearly not sufficient to support an ongoing program. We will have to mobilize our resources to obtain grants and partnerships to effect our goals. This, of course, takes time and talent. As a totally volunteer organization, it is amazing how much has been accomplished; however, to move forward, we will need to intensify our efforts.

#### **Our Mission**

We have, as an organization, established a three prong mission: education, intervention and research. To date, two of those are in play.

#### **Education**

In the education realm, we have a beautiful website ([www.seanstellorfund.org](http://www.seanstellorfund.org)) which includes links to many resources on Bipolar Disorder.



## LURRIE BELL

Reputed to be Sean's favorite guitar player, Lurrie Bell was nominated for a blues music award this year and has been the recipient of many awards for his incredible talent. Son of the famous Carrie Bell, Lurrie braved four plane changes and wowed the audience with his incredible talent and energy.



## RAY HANGEN

Ray Hangen, a good friend and former drummer of Sean, came all the way from Buffalo, New York to play in Sean's honor. Ray and his wife, Gabrielle, brought the blues music community of Buffalo together last July in a benefit for Sean, Buffalo's adopted son.



## VOLUNTEERS

Pictured at left: Matt Harper, Ellen Preston and Kevin Berry. Matt is well known as the owner of Fat Matt's Rib Shack. He donated his time and talent along with the great food to the cause. Matt was a dear long-time friend and Sean supporter. He is just one of 50 or so volunteers who made the benefit possible.

# The love for Sean was palpable

Additionally, we have held our first annual benefit concert where brochures and literature were distributed. This was augmented just recently at the Blues Music Awards in Memphis (Sean received the 2nd and 3rd nominations of his career!) where brochures, bumper stickers and pins were distributed to attendees of the Delta Groove party by an amazing friend of Sean's, Dar McCauley. Hailing from South Florida and host of a well known Blues radio program, she has vowed to continue to spread the word about Sean and the Fund. There is much more to be done in education for sure, but just taking away the stigma of mental illness and placing the discussion in an open forum is the first step.

## Research

As for research, we are unbelievably blessed with talent in every aspect of the issue, led by Dr. Sheri Johnson of the University of California, Berkeley. She has recruited scientists who are renown for their expertise in such related areas as: creativity, sleep disorders, etc., including some as far away as Australia! (For a complete roster of our scientific advisory board, please see our website.)

To me, research is the brain of the organization. The more I know about bipolar disorder, the more I see what is unknown. Diagnosis takes 8 years, on the average, during which time people self-medicate. This compounds the problem of diagnosis and requires expert treatment. Medication that may work for the average person, often results in diminished creativity - an obvious issue for a musician. One tenet of treatment is a scheduled life, again, difficult at best for someone who tours for a living and has a mandatory irregular schedule. Both creativity and social anxiety have been linked to the disorder, as they are frequently indigenous to the musical community.

Sean was frustrated by the inadequate treatment he received and each failed mode furthered his frustration. I am committed to working with this dedicated team to try to find the best, most comprehensive ways to help this population.

## Intervention

Intervention is much more complicated for many reasons. First, if we don't know what works for this group, how do we know what to offer? Secondly, musicians frequently have no insurance thus, needing help to pay for services. Finally, bricks and mortar are expensive to erect and require ongoing seed money. We are currently investigating possible partnerships to make something available to our community. This is, to me, the heart of our mission and its end goal: effective intervention. We must offer hope and help to this underserved and hard working population. Not one other person should be lost while trying to get help. Not one other mother's son or daughter. Not one sister or brother. Not one friend or colleague. Not one.

In future issues, I hope to update you on the progress of the Fund or provide information related to Bipolar Disorder. In the interim, listen to Sean's music: it's unbelievably uplifting. Support local musicians. Pay for their art in whatever form; it is their intellectual property and their livelihood. Learn about Bipolar Disorder and talk about it and Sean. His is a beautiful, sad, compassionate story. We need to eliminate the stigma of mental health problems by bringing them into the light.

- Debbie Costello Smith  
President, The Sean Costello Memorial  
Fund for Bipolar Research

"I'VE GOT A LIGHT THAT  
KEEPS ON SHINING IN MY  
MIND. DAY AND NIGHT, IT  
JUST KEEPS BURNIN' ALL THE  
TIME."  
- SEAN COSTELLO,  
NO HALF STEPPIN'



LISA LOVE

Lisa is the Executive Director of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and a friend to Sean and all musicians. She has a passion for the plight of musicians and volunteered her time and compassion to this effort. Lisa drove all the way from Macon through the snow to show her support for the Fund. She was the perfect emcee for this celebration of Sean's music