

# Cathy Costello

*Transforming Tragedy  
into Hope*



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# My story

On August 23rd, 2015, Cathy Costello's life changed forever. Her oldest son, who for many years has battled with severe mental illness, had quit taking his medication. Meeting on a quiet summer evening with his parents at a local restaurant in Oklahoma City, Christian Costello experienced a delusional, psychotic break and inexplicably stabbed his father, Labor Commissioner Mark Costello to death. Mark died in Cathy's arms.

Through her deeply rooted faith in God and incredible resilience, Cathy has transformed an immense tragedy into a source of hope for so many. Cathy hopes to first, honor the legacy of her husband, the late, great Mark Costello and secondly, to break through the stigma of mental illness and allow her personal experience to be a source of change, strength, and hope for others.

Since her husband's death, Cathy has become a frequent public speaker traveling the country to share her very personal and heartbreaking story and has appeared on national and local radio and television. After testifying twice before a senate hearing committee, she was instrumental in the unanimous passing of the Labor Commissioner Mark Costello Act, which provides Assisted Outpatient Treatment to Oklahomans in an on-going mental health crisis. She traveled to Washington D.C. to advocate for mental health reform, encouraging federal legislators to vote for the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act," which passed in the House and Senate in 2016.

Cathy is an advisory board member for the Mental Health Association of Oklahoma; member of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness); State Planning and Advisory Council Member to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse; National Council for Behavioral Health, Oklahoma Behavioral Health Association board member and a committee member for National Catholic Charities Partnership on Disabilities. Cathy has received the Dr. Krishna "Lifting the Stigma" award and the A.C.C.E.S.S. award presented by the Oklahoma Council for Exceptional Children and OK - AHEAD.

Cathy and Mark were married for nearly 34 years and have 5 children. Cathy's goal is to prevent other families from suffering the tragedy her family experienced by educating and advocating for mental health reform on behalf of the 60 million Americans who suffer with a chemical brain disorder called mental illness.

*"Be kind, for everyone you meet  
is fighting a hard battle."*

*-Plato*