

Rick Warren Launches Mental Health Petition After Son's Suicide

Following their son's tragic suicide, Pastor Rick Warren and his wife, Kay, have launched a petition about mental illness.

"Join Kay and I, and the Saddleback Family, in our effort to urge educators, lawmakers, healthcare professionals, and church congregations to raise the awareness and lower the stigma of mental illness ... and support the families that deal with mental illness on a daily basis," the petition says.

Matthew Warren, 27, shot himself to death on April 5 at his home in Mission Viejo, Calif. He had battled mental illness since birth.

"Matthew was just one of about 11.4 million American adults that suffered from severe mental illness in the past year. In fact, one in five Americans experiences some sort of mental illness," the petition states.

Rick Warren is the founder of the 20,000-member Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. He is also the best-selling author of *The Purpose Driven Life*.

The Warrens started a foundation for mental health in their son's name, the Matthew Warren Fund for Mental Health. They are also active in creating partnerships between the faith community and the public and private sectors to globally treat, support and prevent HIV and AIDS.

The family chose to memorialize Matthew Warren with a private funeral. The family's "grieving has been public," Warren wrote in a letter to his congregation on April 14. "And grieving when haters celebrate your pain has been even more difficult."

Though it is not clear whether or not the gun Matthew Warren used to kill himself was bought online, police have confirmed that it was sold to him illegally with the serial numbers scratched off.