



## BIOGRAPHY



Born and raised in Overland Park, Kansas, Cathy earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Classical Music and Opera from the University of Kansas, where she met the love of her life, Mark Costello. Cathy and Mark were married for nearly 34 years and have raised their 5 children in Edmond, Oklahoma.

Cathy has worked in education in Texas and Oklahoma and built several small businesses with her husband. In 2009, with Cathy's support, Mark pursued a lifelong desire to run for public office. In 2010, Mark was elected as the Oklahoma State Labor Commissioner. In 2014 he was re-elected for his second term and at its' conclusion planned to run for Lieutenant Governor. Mark loved his job and loved serving the people of Oklahoma. He was an excellent and faithful husband, a loving father, and dedicated Christian.

However, the greatest challenge that faced the Costello family was the devastating mental illness that befell their oldest son. Since his late teens, the Costello's son has suffered with diagnosed schizoaffective disorder with psychosis. Their son's mental health and happiness was their number one concern. They did everything medically, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially they possibly could for their son within a broken system.

On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 after a quiet summer dinner at a local restaurant, their son suffered a paranoid, delusional, psychotic break and inexplicably stabbed his father to death. Mark died in Cathy's arms.

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 as well as the "A.C.C.E.S.S. Award" presented by the Oklahoma Council for Exceptional Children and OK-AHEAD.

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.

**Cathy Costello for Hope**

"Transforming Tragedy into Hope"

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