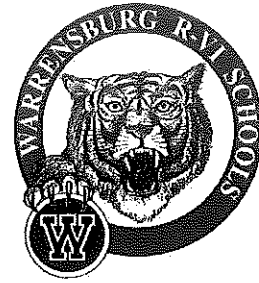


Warrensburg Middle School



January 7, 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions that can be difficult for students, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) does occur in some adolescents. Depression—which is treatable—is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

To proactively address these issues, Warrensburg Middle School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS (Signs of Suicide) Prevention Program. The program aims to identify students concerned about themselves or a friend and give them an opportunity to consult with a school counselor. SOS is listed on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. In a randomized control study, the SOS High School Program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness.
- To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression.
- To provide students training in how to identify potential depression and suicidality in themselves or a friend.
- To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns.
- To help students to know whom they can go for help at school, if they need it.

Our teachers are trained on implementing this program with students. Life 101 teachers will lead the SOS lesson with their students on the morning of January 14, 2020. The lesson involves students viewing and discussing video clips about how to talk with trusted adults about their feelings and how to respond to peers who share feelings that cause concern. We will have counselors from our district and surrounding districts on the day of the program to meet with students who indicate a need to talk after participating in the program. The counselors will contact a parent/guardian if there is any concern regarding your student. We will be hosting a parent night on January 9, 2020 starting at 6p.m. to preview the SOS video that the students will be seeing and answer any questions you may have regarding the program. The parent night will be located in the library/media center.

If you do **NOT** want your child to participate in the SOS middle school program at school, please sign and check mark the information below and return to school office by January 13, 2020. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in the lesson.

Sincerely,

Jim Elliot
Warrensburg Middle School
Principal

Ashley Avila
Warrensburg Middle School
Counselor

Toni Hawley
Warrensburg Middle School
Counselor

_____ I do NOT want my child to participate in the SOS lesson.

Student Name _____ Grade _____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date