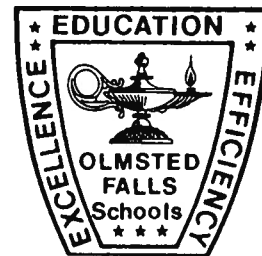


Olmsted Falls City School District
Olmsted Falls Middle School



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MARK E. KURZ
Principal

KRISTA M. DIROCCO
Assistant Principal

January 23, 2012

Dear Parent(s):

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions, which makes it a difficult time for youths, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression, which is treatable, is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

As a proactive way to address these issues, Olmsted Falls Middle School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training through the *Signs of Suicide (SOS) Middle School Program*. This program has been developed by the highly regarded non-profit organization that created the *SOS Signs of Suicide Program for High Schools*, used by thousands of schools nationwide since 2000. It has proven successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention program to show a reduction in suicide attempts. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently released its *Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* conducted in 2003. Across states, the percentage of students who reported that they had seriously thought about killing themselves, ranged from 18% of sixth graders to 28% of eighth graders. Eleven percent of 6th graders and up to 17% of eighth graders reported that they had made a plan about how to kill themselves. Most alarmingly, the percentage of youth that reported that they had actually tried to kill themselves ranged from 7% among sixth graders to 11% of eighth graders.

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 serious depression and potential suicidal tendencies 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 know whom, in the school, they can turn to for help, if they need it.

The SOS program at OFMS will include a classroom presentation which will be conducted by our own school counselors and school psychologists. The classroom presentation includes a video which is followed by a class discussion. All seventh graders will participate in this program on the following days: Phoenix Team on Monday, January 30, and the Griffin Team on Monday, February 13.

If you do NOT want your child to participate in the SOS Program, please complete the form below and return it to Mr. Kurz in the main office. If we do not hear from you, your child will participate in the SOS Program.

Please feel free to access a SOS: Signs of Suicide Parent newsletter on the middle school web site at www.ofcs.org/middle

Sincerely,

Mark E. Kurz

If you do not want your child to participate in this program, please return the form below to Mr. Kurz as soon as possible

I do not give permission for _____ to participate in the *Signs of Suicide Prevention Program* at Olmsted Falls Middle School on the dates outlined above.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Team: _____