

Wellness Week at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School in Kingston Ontario

36% of Ontario High School Students report feeling that they are constantly under stress (CAMH 2009). Through informal discussions with parents, students, and staff at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School, it was quite evident that a significant number of students at the school identify stress and stress management strategies as one of their top health priorities.

To address this health concern, the school Public Health Nurse and our Youth Engagement specialist teamed up with community partners and a core group of students, parents, and staff at Holy Cross to deliver a week of free activities and information sessions aimed at helping students deal with their stress. A different theme, promoting healthy lifestyles, was presented each day. On Monday students got to 'FUEL' up with a healthy fruit smoothie. On Tuesday, students could 'CHILL' as they enjoyed free massages given by registered massage therapy students. Wednesday was a day to 'CHAT'. Students were encouraged to reach out, talk, and listen to each other. Some classes enjoyed a presentation on 'transitions' and dealing with stress by Queen's University Outreach Counsellor Mary Walsh, BNSc., RN., and all students were encouraged to wear pink to show their commitment to end bullying everywhere. Parents were addressed as well at an evening presentation featuring Dr. Mike Condra, Director of the Department of Health, Counselling and Disability Services at Queen's University. His presentation, titled 'Teen Stress and Distress' was a huge success with over 250 community members in attendance. On Thursday, students were encouraged to get active and 'PLAY'. An Xbox 'dance off' was held in the cafeteria and a great time was had by all!

This week was made successful through partnerships with staff, students and parents at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School, Queen's University, and Trillium College.

Youth engagement was imperative to the success of this event with numerous students providing leadership and support on many different levels. The Take Charge leadership group of 5 students was instrumental in planning the events and in working the events each day. School Council helped with advertising by putting it on their facebook page, attending and promoting the events each day. Four photography students came out each day to capture the events. This event will be featured in this year's yearbook.

Stress Workshops

Leading up to this week of events, throughout the month of February, stress workshops were offered to interested classes, using a resource developed by Sudbury Public Health called *Can You Feel It?* This resource was developed to support teachers in meeting the mental health, stress and resiliency themes found throughout the current (1999) Ontario Health & Physical Education curriculum for students between grades 9 – 12. The *Can You Feel It?* Stress Workshop and Resource Guide is a multifaceted tool designed to help provide students with the opportunity to start building the necessary life skills to manage and cope with the stress in their everyday lives. By helping students understand how their bodies react to their individual stress they can learn to cope with stress in a healthy way.

Unfortunately, no stress workshop classes were booked by teachers. The youth worker and Public Health Nurse will be running workshops at a later date.

Advertising:

In school for the week of events:

Daily posters, morning announcements, announcements in homerooms the week before events, school newsletter, school webpage, student council facebook page (encouraging students to 'like' the events).

In the community for the Parent evening:

Hundreds of posters were distributed in the community, email invites to all schools in the Catholic and Public boards, press release, articles in two local papers, morning radio interviews with organizer from Parent Council and with Dr. Condra, the presenter.

Budget:

Smoothies and supplies - \$150.00. Paid for by student Take Charge grant.

Evening Speaker - \$200.00 – covered by Parent Reaching Out grant (**PRO**)

Refreshments for evening - \$100 – **PRO** grant

Posters advertising event - \$150 – **PRO** grant

Daytime Speaker – No charge

Massages – 3 hours provided free of charge by Trillium college students (Outreach hours)

X-box Kinect - \$30.00 for Dance Party game (purchased by Health unit)

Banners, Posters, Markers etc - \$50.00. Paid for by student Take Charge grant.

Feedback:

Feedback was received for the week of events. A short survey was developed by the Youth Engagement worker using iPad technology. The grant group brought the iPad to several students in the hallways of the school over a lunch hour to obtain feedback on the week of events. These results are not yet available but students loved the idea of using new technology to fill out a survey.

Positive feedback was received from staff at Holy Cross – several staff members liked ‘positive’ spin put on all events. Events did not focus on unhealthy ways to relieve stress ie: drugs, alcohol, sexual relationships but instead focused entirely on healthy ways to cope with stress.

Talking about issues -----Talking about possibilities

Youth as problems -----Youth as solutions

Youth as recipients-----Youth as partners

Reactive ----- Proactive