

ACHC & OCCMHA Host Youth Substance Use / Suicide Prevention Event

Oakland County teens took the lead role in a countywide initiative to promote good mental health, as well as substance use prevention during a free event at the Emagine Theatre in Royal Oak.

“Youth Voices” was coordinated by the teen collaborative, PEEPS (Peers Educating and Empowering Peers), which represents youth members of the Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities (ACHC).

“The fact that this important message about substance use prevention and maintaining good mental health is being shared by teens for teens, makes it even more meaningful,” said Julie Brenner, Executive Director of ACHC. “Our goal - the goal of our teens - is to create a safe environment where youth learn, participate, and leave feeling empowered to make healthy life choices.”



Teenagers Nina Hesse and Raven Rogers are members of the PEEPS collaborative. “The event brings different groups of teens together for a common cause,” said Rogers. “Kids should come, not only to learn what healthy choices are, but to learn how to make those healthy choices,” adds Hesse.

Funding for the event was provided in part by the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Grant held by Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority (OCCMHA). OCCMHA also helps to fund ACHC. Both agencies are members of the Oakland County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force which is facilitated by the Oakland County Health Division.

“When you consider that one out of five teens has abused prescription drugs before the age of 13, and that suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between 10 and 24, it truly demonstrates the need for events like “Youth Voices,” says OCCMHA Executive Director and CEO, Willie Brooks.

The event featured a performance by Magician Anthony Grupido, as well as a presentation by youth advocate Kenny Spears. Teens were also educated on the Okay2say program designed to empower Michigan students, parents, school personnel, community mental health service programs, and law enforcement to share and respond to student safety threats.