

Are You as Savvy as a 6th Grader?

When it comes to mental health, our 6th graders have learned a lot during the past month. I'd have to say, they're pretty savvy about the various mental illnesses and how to combat "stigma."

In fact, they recently completed a community service project where they decorated sketch pads for the Youth Services Inpatient Unit of Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital. These will be used by young patients in the hospital's art therapy groups, and they represent just one way our kids are showing increased understanding and compassion for others.

If you are in school during the next few weeks, check out the posters our 6th graders made for the mental health poster competition, which are hanging in or just outside the lunchroom. You can see they learned a lot!

6th graders aren't the only ones who have been learning about mental health. As part of St. Pet's Mental Health Awareness Month, 7th and 8th graders have talked a good deal about various mental illnesses, including that they are not a sign of personal weakness and are treatable!

In particular, they've learned a lot about depression and what they can do to help those who may struggle with it (including themselves). They've heard first-hand a "recovery story" from someone who is living with a mental illness and what helped him the most.

Do you know some of these important facts that your kids now know?

- The most common mental illness among teens/kids is ANXIETY.
- Mental illness is a physical illness affecting the BRAIN.
- Mental illness strikes ONE IN FIVE people at some point in their lives.

We celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month here at St. Pet's, not only for our students but for our teachers, too. Teachers had training in suicide awareness to help them become more aware of what to do when they are concerned about a student's moods, words or behaviors. They also had time set aside to practice mind/body/spirit wellness.

For parents, a talk on eating disorders is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19 at 9am in the Parish Center. Don't miss this! Eating disorders are becoming more prevalent among children (not just teens).

Finally, our thanks to Janice Chua, Alexian Brothers' counseling intern, for being the vision behind Mental Health Awareness Month, and for all her hard work on this and many other projects during the school year. Janice will be greatly missed.

Blessings to all during this busy month of May ... be well!

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