



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local High School Students Create Suicide Prevention Ads.

Helena -The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department has collaborated with Capitol High School drama students to create an ad campaign to combat youth suicide. The ads feature youth telling personalized stories and promote the National Suicide Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Montana youths 10-24 years of age. According to the 2007 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) nearly 17% of local high school students reported seriously considering suicide in the last 12 months. In fact, according to the American Association of Suicidology, Montana has the highest rate of completed suicides in the nation at 22 per 100,000 persons. This rate is twice the national rate of 11 per 100,000 persons. (As of 2005, the last year we have complete data.)

Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department, working under a prevention grant from the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Act, has begun to tackle this very serious issue. This grant provides funding to target our Helena area youth. One proven prevention philosophies being used locally is the "Peer to Peer" model. This model utilizes young people to develop their own prevention messages and activities. According to Jayce Cox, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the health department, "With today's tech savvy youth, relying solely on television and radio only limits our ability to reach them. To be effective we must employ new media outlets such as Myspace and Facebook to meet the youth where they are. Utilizing the peer-to-peer model allows us to identify the most effective messaging. Rather than adults attempting to develop a message for a group they no longer belong to; we have the target audience show us what messages work best for them."

With the assistance of Capitol High drama teacher Carrie Calvert, commercial producer Kevin Hamm, and the drama students this project was able to go from a rough concept to commercials ready for broadcast. Using many hours of their free time the students wrote, acted, directed, and produced the spots. The spots can be viewed on Myspace at <http://www.myspace.com/helenasuicideprevention> and will be aired on local television. For more information about suicide prevention contact Jayce Cox, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at 457-8906 or visit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website at www.AFSP.org

The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.

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