Dear Parent or Guardian,

The adolescent years are marked by a wide range of emotions that can be difficult for teens, their parents, and educators. Depression appears to be occurring at a much earlier age and is one of the most frequently occurring mental health challenges that adolescents face. We also know that the teen suicide rate has nearly doubled over the past decade. Fortunately, depression is a treatable problem, and effective treatment of depression helps prevent suicide.

In order to proactively address this issue and increase depression and suicide awareness, on Wednesday, November 18 and Thursday, November 19, Kilmer school counselors along with our school social worker and psychologist will be implementing the A.C.T. (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) program – a depression awareness and suicide prevention program for seventh grade students as part of the mental health awareness programming at Kilmer.

The goals in participating in this program are the following:
- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness.
- To teach students how to identify serious depression and potential suicide warnings in themselves or a friend.
- To emphasize to students the importance of talking to a trusted adult when concerned about themselves or others.
- To understand the action steps individuals should take should they experience the signs of depression or suicide within themselves or on behalf of a friend: A.C.T. – Acknowledge that your friend has a problem, Tell the person that you Care, and Tell a trusted adult.

On Monday, November 16, students will be introduced to the depression awareness and suicide prevention program through a brief lesson during PAWS. Depending on the period your child has Health and PE, your child will then participate in the A.C.T. program on Wednesday, November 18 (PE periods 1,2,3, and 4) or Thursday, November 19 (PE periods 6,7, and 8). During this time, seventh grade students will view a 25 minute video titled Time to ACT. The video highlights the stories of three middle school students and provides simple tips and instructions to help students identify signs of distress in themselves and others and the action steps to A.C.T. - Acknowledge, Care, and Tell. After the video, students will complete a brief screening form to assess if further support is needed. Our school counselors, psychologist, and social worker will review the screening forms on the same day, meet with students who identified symptoms of depression, and notify parents.

To learn more about the Depression Awareness and Suicide Prevention Program - A.C.T., parents may view the “Time to ACT” video and student materials on Tuesday, November 3 from 8:00-9:00 am and 12:00-1:00 pm.

If you do not wish to have your child participate in the A.C.T. program, please inform your child’s school counselor in writing (email or a signed note) by Friday, November 6. If you have questions and are unable to attend the parent viewing on November 3, please contact your child’s school counselor. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

We are pleased that our Student Services staff is able to offer this service to Kilmer students and their parents. For further information about the subject of depression, you may refer to the National Institute of Mental Health website: http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml

Sincerely,

Ronald L. James, Principal
Sarah Fontana, Director of Student Services