



SAN GABRIEL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Gabrielino High School Students Practice Mindfulness Activities to Combat Anxiety, Stress

SAN GABRIEL, CA – Gabrielino High School students colored intricate mandalas – geometric patterns filled with bright blues, greens and pinks – as soothing music filled the quad on Nov. 15 during the school’s second Mental Health Awareness Day of the year.

Students found ways to promote mental health awareness with mindfulness activities that help alleviate symptoms associated with anxiety, depression and stress.

“Kids of all ages face many stressors – they experience anxiety, depression, trauma – and a lot of it is being missed,” said Jacqueline Woods, a licensed marriage and family therapist and guest speaker for the event. “I want to provide information on how students can get help. My hope is that after, they can walk away with coping skills or the understanding that it is important to get help.”

After a coloring session, Woods, who specializes in post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression, led students through breathing exercises. Woods asked students to take a normal breath through the nose and slowly exhale through the mouth – a simple and effective technique to calm anxiety and refocus.

“We all need ways to relax and clear our mind, and it’s important to take time for yourself,” Jackie Gutierrez, senior and Associated Student Body (ASB) class-leader said. “Coloring is a good way to release your mind and relax.”

Students also took in a viewing of “Angst,” a film that explores the causes and effects of anxiety and highlights options for handling the condition. Parents attended an evening viewing of the film and participated in a follow-up panel discussion.

“Events like this are empowering because you don’t always know what others are going through so it’s good to bring this awareness,” senior and ASB member Edgar Mercado said. “The film was really impactful and it made you think about how you can help the school community.”

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Gabrielino's Mental Health Awareness Day, the second of four events to be held in 2018-19, is a component of a wellness action plan to improve student nutrition, physical activity and social/mental well-being.

The first Mental Health Day, hosted Sept. 26, brought students together to promote social connectedness and highlight issues such as isolation.

"It is imperative that students are supported academically, socially and emotionally, and through events like Mental Health Awareness Days, we can bring attention to these important issues," SGUSD Superintendent Dr. John Pappalardo said. "We are proud of our students for supporting one another, and thankful to our community partners for helping to bring these amazing opportunities to our campuses."

Mental Health Awareness Day was organized by Gabrielino's Wellness Council in partnership with the San Gabriel Public Library, as well as the school's ASB, Peer Helping and Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) clubs.

PHOTO CAPTION:

GAB_MENTAL_HEALTH: Gabrielino High School students, alongside Gabrielino Principal Sharron Heinrich, colored intricate mandalas as soothing music filled the quad during the school's second Mental Health Awareness Day of the year on Nov. 15. Students engaged in mindfulness activities and learned techniques for anxiety and stress management.

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