



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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La Serna Pilots Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Referral Program

Initiative encourages students to “Notice, Talk, Act” for mental wellness

WHITTIER, CA – La Serna High School student leaders on May 11 challenged more than 550 classmates to “Shatter the Stigma” associated with mental health through the debut of a “Notice, Talk, Act” program initiative, which encourages students to actively support friends who may struggle with mental illness.

As part of La Serna’s “Mental Health Awareness Day,” students produced and screened a video encouraging their peers to use the “Notice, Talk, Act” approach to reach out to friends in need and hosted presentations outlining the benefits of seeking professional mental health counseling.

“Mental health is something that affects everyone,” senior Natalie Gonzalez said. “It is so important for students to be informed and realize that struggling with a mental illness isn’t a problem that someone should feel ashamed or embarrassed of. It’s something that can be helped and the community here at La Serna is capable of providing that help.”

The 11-student “Notice, Talk, Act” outreach team hosted an informational booth inspiring students to formally pledge to “Shatter the Stigma” through hand-written pledges on hand-shaped green paper cutouts. The team also passed along its message through promotional materials.

“I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to join the ‘Notice, Talk, Act’ team because I have learned a lot about myself through the process,” senior Anahli Avina said. “We’re the first students in the District to create something like this. It feels good to be a part of something so positive and proactive.”

The program is a part of the Whittier Union High School District’s Student Well-Being Program, which was launched in 2014 to expand wellness centers and social-emotional support for students.

Student Well-Being Liaison Angela Castellanos, who secured grant funding for the pilot program, hopes to replicate the program model at all Whittier Union schools.

“We are trying to create a solid, cohesive foundation of information that all students may have access to if they are interested in learning more about mental health,” Castellanos said. “This model gives students the opportunity to work peer to peer and connect with one another in an incredibly supportive way.”

The “Notice, Talk, Act” program model is funded by a “Typical or Troubled?” grant from the American Psychiatric Foundation, which encourages student organizations to develop innovative methods to continue to educate parents, students and school communities about mental health support options.

“Whittier Union cares deeply about the well-being and achievement of all our students and thus is dedicated to building and maintaining a comprehensive support system including support for mental health,” Whittier Union Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson said. “One of the key foundational components of this system is early identification and referring a student for treatment. The ‘Notice, Talk, Act’ program gives us another opportunity to create a safe and caring environment for our students.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

WELLNESS: La Serna High School’s “Notice, Talk, Act” team hosted an informational booth during morning break and lunch on May 11 in support of the school’s “Mental Health Awareness Day.” They are pictured holding hand-written pledges.

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The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement.

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