

Darienite

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Darien Teens Take First 'Youth Mental Health First Aid Training' Course, To Be Offered Again

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Many of us learn CPR for medical emergencies — but what about mental health emergencies?

On June 27 and 28, the Community Fund of Darien brought a “Youth Mental Health First Aid” training to local teenagers to equip them with skills to recognize and respond to the unique risks posed by a teenager’s mental health crisis.

Darienite Darien and Norwalk teens, parents and youth workers gathered in Noroton Presbyterian Church for the eight-hour training to learn about mental illness and how to help a teen in need.
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This article, an announcement from the Community Fund of Darien, is by Sarah-Jane Clarke, a volunteer with the organization.

By the end of the course, participants said they felt prepared to deal with friends, co-workers, or students who may be dealing with mental health issues.

“Knowing that teens often seek out friends and peers when they are experiencing a crisis, we offered this training to 16 and 17 year-olds in our community to help prepare them to respond in a mental health emergency just as they are trained to respond in a physical health emergency” said Carrie Bernier, executive director of the Community Fund of Darien.

In promoting the training, email and social media promoting the training referenced the popular and controversial Netflix series, “13 Reasons Why,” saying: “There are more than “13 Reasons Why” you should take this course.” The hit Netflix series is the story of a teen girl’s explanation of why she committed suicide.

Many high schoolers in Darien have watched this show and saw the horrible repercussions of not helping somebody with signs of depression or other mental illnesses. Therefore, teens who wanted to be able to spot and aid anybody in their classes or sports teams for mental illness signed up for the course.

Through the events and lessons included in this course, these teens are now ready to help out those in need.

The lessons in the course consisted of lectures that included role play and simulations to ultimately teach the participants how to recognize and deal with mental illness.

These illnesses include anxiety, depression and eating disorders, all of which are unfortunately very prevalent today.

In fact, 20 percent of teens experience depression before they reach adulthood and 40 percent of adults experience some form of anxiety in their day-to-day lives. These statistics reinforce how important it is for all individuals to learn how to deal with mental illness, as it is very present in our society today.

“It was helpful to walk through the scenarios with a trained professional,” one Darien teen said after completing the course. Other participants described the workshop as “practical,” “eye-opening,” “helpful,” and “valuable.”

"Noroton Presbyterian Church was delighted to provide the venue," said Pastor John Seiders. "Awareness regarding the complexity of mental health issues in our community and our culture is a key to understanding overall health."

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Given the success of the first training, The Community Fund of Darien plans to offer the course again multiple times throughout the coming year to Darien teens in the hope that many more will participate.

- **If you would like to participate or know a teen who might be interested, please email Emily Larkin at emily.larkin@communityfunddarien.org.**

"Our church looks forward to helping provide more opportunities for youth as well as adults to take advantage of this training," Seiders said.