

Parents Can Register 7th, 8th Graders Now for One of 40 Seats in 'Choose Love' Enrichment Program at the Depot

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The Depot youth center is hosting an intensive program with a limited number of seats for 7th and 8th grade Darien students, teaching them "core competencies and skills, beyond academics, that can empower them to thrive emotionally, mentally, personally and socially," according to an email sent out by the Depot.

Called the "Jesse Lewis Choose Love Enrichment Program," the twice-a-month workshops held Monday afternoons at the Depot will have two sessions, the first for 7th graders and the second for 8th graders, with sessions meeting at different times on Monday afternoons.

An informational meeting for 7th and 8th graders and their parents will be held at 7 p.m., Sept. 9 at the Depot.

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The program is free (paid for by the Darien Foundation) and open to any student in either grade, but with limited spaces. [You can register online here.](#)

The [Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement](#), a 501(c)3 charitable organization, was founded by Scarlett Lewis in honor of her son, one of the victims in the Sandy Hook shooting in Newtown.

According to [the organization's website](#), "Scarlett started the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement™ to foster the understanding that with the right tools, we can educate and encourage individuals to choose loving thoughts over angry thoughts."

Here's the full text of the email:

Join our commitment to the importance of teaching children core competencies and skills, beyond academics, that can empower them to thrive emotionally, mentally, personally and socially.

We are excited to offer this new and innovative program, open to all 7th and 8th graders. This program will be taught by Laura Emerson, who helped develop the program and is a teacher in the Darien Public Schools, and Amanda Mariano, who is an assistant program director at the Depot and is currently completing her degree to become a licensed social worker.

The "Choose Love Enrichment Program" will meet twice a month on Mondays [from]

— 3 to 4 p.m. for 7th graders, and

—4:15 to 5:15 p.m. for 8th graders.

Space is limited to 20 children per grade, so please sign up quickly.

Meeting dates: 9/23, 10/7, 10/21, 11/4, 11/18, 12/2, 12/16, 1/6, 1/27, 2/10, 2/24, 3/2, 3/16, 3/30, 4/13, 4/27, 5/11 FINAL meeting. *Everyone is expected to attend all meetings.*

Cost: FREE!! This program is being underwritten by The Darien Foundation.

The 'Choose' Love Formula

The program includes a powerful formula for choosing love — comprised of these character values: courage, gratitude, forgiveness and compassion-in-action — it can be used in any situation to promote personal empowerment, resilience, connection and compassion.

Learning these core values helps students achieve academic and personal success, along with emotional well-being by: increased self- and social awareness, improved relationship skills, responsible decision-making

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skills, enhanced self-control and self-management, and positive intention.

The Choose Love Enrichment Program is a "social and emotional learning" (SEL) based program that includes character education, positive psychology, emotional intelligence, neuroscience and mindfulness. Children learn skills and tools to choose love in any circumstance."