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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT 2016

The YMHS successfully took place on the 9th March with approximately 300 high school students and teachers from across the region taking part in the Summit. The objective of the summit was to assist in addressing and removing the negative stigma associated with mental health issues, by providing students and teachers with the skills, knowledge and resources to identify mental health issues, thereby building their capacity to help their broader school community and their families.

Funded by the Mounties Group through ClubGRANTS, the YMHS is a collaboration between local mental health and community service providers to help students and teachers create a mental health Action Plan for participating high schools in the Fairfield and Liverpool LGA.

Students were divided in 3 mixed school groups and took part in 3 workshops run by Mind Blank and WEAVE as well as meeting the Community Service Providers, a mental health expert Q&A panel session and creating a 5 meter banner around the theme of mental health and wellbeing.

33 Teachers had a 5 hour professional development session titled "Accidental Counsellor".

All attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form and the following is a summary of the key responses:

Summary of selected evaluation feedback from YMHS 2016:

- 95% of students agreed that mental health is important and it needs to be talked about more (93% teachers agreed)
- 82% of students learnt something new about mental health at the YMHS (77% of teachers agreed)
- 96% of students would recommend the YMHS to their friends or colleagues (100% of teachers agreed)
- 97% of students had a positive experience at the YMHS and thought it helped to reduce the stigma attached to mental health (100% of teachers agreed)
- 89% of students met a new service provider at the YMHS that they were not previously aware of (63% of teachers met a new service provider, with some not having the opportunity to do so during their limited break in between the professional development session)



Clockwise. Top Left: Melissa Malu (SWC) Presents Mounties Director with a Certificate of Appreciation during the YMHS Summit. Top Right: Students in the auditorium for the introduction. Bottom right: Students participated in designing a 5 meter banner around Mental Health. Bottom Left: Panellists during Panel Discussion, Leonie Fernando, Strong Minds Team Leader - Woodville Alliance, Nicole Loehr, School Liaison Officer - STARTTS, Greta Kretchmer, Social Worker - Youth Health Counsellor - Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team - FLYHT, John Lomnicki "Walk a mile" project, Sunil Varma Manager of COPMI Children of Parents with Mental Illness - COPMI, May Lin.- headspace Youth reference group.

A post YMHS follow up session took place at the headspace office in Liverpool on the 3rd of June and was attended by 14 teachers from across 12 schools. The 90 minute session was well received by teachers with many sharing ideas, strategies and resources for creating a healthy school environment as well as discussing challenges.

Moving Forward

As a result of the YMHS, many schools are now planning to form Youth Mental Health Action Teams lead by students. Some teachers have already enquired about booking in a new group of students for next year's YMHS.

As for the teachers follow up program, a number of teachers have requested to continue the interaction and conversation within the group over the next few terms ahead of the 2017 Youth Mental Health Summit. Even further, there was a suggestion to set up a "Youth Mental Wellness Alliance" (final name to be decided by the teachers) where teachers can meet onsite at a different high school each time and share strategies and resources, possibly with the assistance of a neutral third party mental health community service provider at each session.

Acknowledgements

South West Connect would like to thank our partners and all the exhibitors who participated in the Youth Mental Health Summit 2016. We look forward to working with you again at the upcoming Youth Mental Health Summit 2017.

- Liverpool City Council
- Fairfield City Council
- headspace Liverpool
- Transcultural Mental Health Centre
- Western Sydney University - National Disability Coordination Officer Programme
- Good Shepherd Australia & New Zealand
- Community First Step
- Youth Off The Streets
- FLYHT (Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team)
- Woodville Alliance
- STARTTS
- Mission Australia
- NSW Health COPMI (Children of Parents with a Mental Illness)
- Youth Action - OUTBURST! Friend2Friend program