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Alameda Girls Inc. puts depression at the forefront



SALAMY

Will speak on teen depression.

■ Group from Blueprint program will share its knowledge of the disease at mental health event

By Susan McDonough

STAFF WRITER

ALAMEDA — Mood swings, sleeping disorders and a lack of interest in things might sound like typical teenage behavior, but if expressed over a period of more than a few weeks they could be signs of

depression, warn a group of local girls studying the subject at Girls Inc.

The girls, members of Girls Inc. Blueprint program, plan to share what they have learned about depression at a mental health event this week at the Girls Inc. Meyers Center in Alameda.

Depression is "a bigger problem than people think," said Ileana Matzorkis, a student at Holy Names High School in Oakland and a member of Blueprint.

Ileana, 16, and a handful of other girls

from local high schools meet each week to discuss and study the social issues they say don't get talked about much at home or at school.

Teen depression has been the focus of their attention since earlier this year; it is a topic they said they each have been affected by in one way or another.

The Girls Inc. event scheduled for Monday is the first of several the group has planned to educate their peers and the community on depression.

They will be joined by guest speaker Nancy Salamy, executive director of Crisis Support Services of Alameda County, a nonprofit agency providing suicide prevention counseling and other mental health services to about 50,000 people a year.

Salamy said adults sometimes dismiss symptoms of depression in youth because they have a hard time thinking about their children as vulnerable.

Please see **TEENS**, Local 5

Depression is focus of event

► **TEENS**, from Local 1

But depression affects people of all ages. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among people ages 15 to 24, and studies show as many as one in eight teens suffers from depression, according to Girls Inc. Many more cases go unreported.

Salamy will talk about the signs and causes of teen depression, the possible consequences and ways parents and organizations can help struggling teens become more resilient against the disease.

"Adolescence is a difficult time, but is also a crucial time for kids to develop coping skills and resilience," she said.

It is important for teens and adults alike to recognize who is really at risk and needs inter-

vention, which could range from a simple conversation to therapy or hospitalization.

"If people aren't communicating and aren't speaking because of shame or stigma . . . then intervention can't happen," Salamy said.

The Girls Inc. of the Island City Mental Health and Teen Depression seminar will be from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Monday at the Girls Inc. Meyers Center, 1724 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for teens, and will be sold at the door. The event is sponsored by online auto insurance company Esurance. Call Girls Inc. at 521-1743 or visit www.girlsincislandcity.org for more information.

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Call (800) 309-2131 to reach the Crisis Support Services of Alameda County 24-hour crisis hot line.