



May is Mental Health Awareness Month

There is no better time to increase awareness of mental health and make a difference in our communities. In this spirit, we would like to share with you information from Project AWARE Wood County.

Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness And Resilience in Education)

Wood County was one of three counties in the State of Ohio to receive the Project AWARE grant in October 2014. Project AWARE is the result of President Obama's "Now is the Time" initiative to reduce school violence. One of the goals of this initiative is to improve access to mental health services and treatment outcomes.

Mission – To improve the physical and mental health, well-being and educational needs of Wood County children and families.

Vision – Wood County children and families are able to overcome adversity to be productive citizens.

Wood County was a Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) grantee from 2009-2014. Project AWARE funding is allowing Wood County to expand and enhance some of the programs initiated under SS/HS funding and add a new initiative related to trauma.

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus) is school-wide, systems change program, effective at reducing rates of bullying in schools. This program is research-based and focuses on teaching adults in the school and community to identify bullying behavior and how to intervene appropriately. All Wood County districts were trained in Olweus during the SS/HS funding. Project AWARE is providing support to schools currently using this program and to invigorate the use of the program in other schools.

Expect Respect Support Groups are offered to students who have experienced or witnessed any type of relationship violence. Youth are supported by peers and an adult group leader. Students discover how to have healthier relationships by developing skills such as learning to identify abusive behavior and communicate effectively. We are working to expand this program to additional middle and high school buildings.

PAX Good Behavior Game is an evidence-based program that increases positive experiences and decreases disruptive behaviors in elementary classrooms. Teachers promote positive behavior through the use of games in which children can win "Granny's Wacky Prizes" – free activities that can be done in the classroom for 30 seconds-1 minute at a time. The goal is to significantly increase the number of teachers trained in the Good Behavior Game and to continue providing coaching from specially trained "PAX Partners".

Trauma-Informed Care: As part of Project AWARE Wood County, a team of county leaders is working to identify a plan or program that will increase teachers' ability to recognize trauma in their students. The hope is to offer a pilot program that will enhance teachers' knowledge of types of trauma, how to identify and refer students who have experienced trauma and ways to manage trauma-related behaviors in the classroom. We hope to eventually expand this training to several county school districts by the end of the grant.

Dr. David Schonfeld, MD, FAAP visited Wood County in Feb. 2016 and while here we recorded his presentation to teachers about loss and grief in students and a podcast about grief and loss in young people. Those can be found on iTunes under Wood County Prevention Coalition or online using the following links:

http://www.podcastgarden.com/episode/dr-david-j-schonfeld-a-sit-down-discussion_71909
http://www.podcastgarden.com/episode/dr-david-j-schonfeld-md-faap-part-1_71675
http://www.podcastgarden.com/episode/dr-david-j-schonfeld-md-faap-part-2_71755

Youth Mental Health First Aid: Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is an international program that focuses on early identification and referral of adolescents who might be experiencing symptoms of a mental health disorder or are in crisis. YMHFA is an 8-hour class for adults who interact with youth 12-18 years of age. The program gives participants basic information about common mental health disorders and reinforces the use of a simple 5-step intervention plan through the use of discussion and activities. The training is offered at no cost; everyone receives a manual and information about local resources. Many school teachers and staff from around the county have attended; the course is appropriate for parents, coaches, and youth group leaders. Follow this link http://www.podcastgarden.com/episode/youth-mental-health-first-aid_65620 to hear a podcast about Youth Mental Health First Aid.

For more information about any of the programs mentioned, please contact Angela Patchen at apatchen@wcesc.org or 419-354-9010 x 228. To find out about the programs listed above or PAX trainings and upcoming YMHFA classes, please visit <https://sites.google.com/site/wcprojectaware/home>.