

Dakota Family Night focuses on understanding LGBTQ teens

By Nicole Tuttle, For The Macomb Daily
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At a Dakota Family Night Out in September, the topic was local teen drug trends. The Nov. 9 Dakota Family Night Out topic is focused on understanding LGBTQ teens. Photo courtesy of STEPHANIE LANGE



At a Dakota Family Night Out in September, the topic was local teen drug trends. The Nov. 9 Dakota Family Night Out topic is about “Life on the Spectrum: What You Didn’t Know That You Didn’t Know About LGBTQ and Teens.” Photo courtesy of STEPHANIE LANGE

What does the term “genderbread person” mean?

This is one of the many questions that will be addressed during the Nov. 9 Family Night Out at Dakota High School when the topic of “Life on the Spectrum: What You Didn’t Know That You Didn’t Know About LGBTQ and Teens” is explored.

The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Macomb Township school’s atrium and is open to any adult in the community and students in grades six to 12.

The family night will examine current terminology for gender identity as well as pronoun use, and explore how gender roles affect youth in addition to discussing gender as a spectrum of identities. LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning.

“We will discuss gender roles in our society and how they shape our behavior, and how gender is a spectrum, not just male or female,” said Dakota Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange.

The evening will also include information about suicide and drug prevention for youth who do not identify with their birth gender. Lange said LGBTQ teens are at a higher risk of suicide attempts or drug and alcohol abuse.

“We try to focus on at risk populations ...” Lange said.

Offering support to people on the gender spectrum will also be discussed.

“We will talk about family acceptance, if a child does come out to you, things that are helpful to say and things less helpful to say or do,” she said, adding the discussion will focus on basics.

“We are seeing young people expressing gender diversity and feeling like adults are not getting it, what is going on with them. Adults do not understand gender diversity. It is hard for them to talk to their parents or get adults to understand that they are gender diverse,” Lange said.

Family Night Out is sponsored by the Dakota Coalition Teen Council and Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families. Teens on the council selected the topic for the second Family Night Out event of the school year due to its timeliness and concern that it is not well understood.

The first Family Night Out at Dakota in the 2015 school year in September focused on local teen drug trends.

Lange will offer 45 minutes of presentation before participants break up into tables of small groups at the Nov. 9 event.

She said the goal is for the discussion of gender roles in society.

A free dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. RSVP is requested to slange@cvs.k12.mi.us or 586-723-2872 by Nov. 6.