The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions which can be difficult for youth, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression-which is treatable-is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

To proactively address these issues, Rockwood Jr/Sr. High is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS (Signs of Suicide) Prevention Program. The program has proven to be successful at increasing help-seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend.

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

* To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
* To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
* To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicidality in themselves or a friend
* To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns
* To help students know whom in the school they can turn to for help, if they need it.

The SOS program will be implemented in Mrs. Kuzemchak’s 9th grade Health classes next week (Jan. 23rd, 24th &25th). Mr. Buterbaugh’s 9th Grade class will have the program at a later date. There will be a permission sent home for all 9th graders, prior to implementation explaining the program in further detail and asking for a signature if you DO NOT want your child to sit in class the days the SOS program is being implemented. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Mrs. Opfar at 926-4631, ext. 1115 or popfar@rockwoodschools.org.