

## Fox Cities schools, organizations to host mental health event

Written by Jen Zettel Post-Crescent Media

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School and community leaders are taking a broad approach to a problem that affects young people across the Fox Valley.

School districts have partnered with the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region and United Way Fox Cities to host a resource fair Wednesday that will focus on mental health. The free event will begin at 5:30 p.m. at River View School in Kaukauna.

Keynote speaker Dan Reidenberg, executive director of the national organization Suicide Awareness Voices in Education, will give a presentation at 6:30 p.m. that will include input from both adults and young people. Audience members will be able to ask questions.

Reidenberg —who’s also managing director of the National Council for Suicide Prevention and the U.S. representative to the International

Association of Suicide Prevention —said conversations about mental health should happen at home, in faith communities and with physicians.

“People that are struggling with mental health issues feel stigmatized. ... If somebody doesn’t ask, they won’t disclose what they’re going through, but by asking, you open the opportunity for them to talk about what’s going on,” Reidenberg said.

Mark Duerwaechter, district administrator of the Kaukauna Area School District, said organizers decided to host the event because of widespread mental health needs.

“We know that all communities are dealing with and managing and coping with mental health issues,” he said. “We thought it would be an excellent opportunity for other communities. We felt it would be a stronger event with other school districts and communication agencies.”

The Neenah Joint School District wanted to get involved because mental health issues among students are rising there. This will show students that it’s OK to talk about mental health, said Tim Gantz, director of pupil services.

“Kids take their lead from adults all the time on almost everything, so if they see us be uptight about (mental health), they will be, too. It starts with us as role models,” Gantz said.

Other public schools involved include Appleton, Freedom, Hortonville, Kimberly, Little Chute, Menasha, New London, Oshkosh, Seymour and Shiocton.

Organizers want the mental health fair to become an annual event. “We do hope it has some staying power for the future,” Duerwaechter said.

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### IF YOU GO

- **What:** “Let’s Talk About It Fox Valley”
- **When:** Wednesday
- **Where:** River View School, 101 Oak St., Kaukauna
- **Who:** Open to the public
- **Cost:** Free
- **Details:** A resource fair will run from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., followed by keynote speaker Dan Reidenberg