

MENTAL HEALTH



LEONARD J. MCCULLOCH

Take signs of teen depression seriously

independence and self reliance. Many teens want less to do with their parents and homes and are pushed by internal and external pressures toward their peers and life outside the family.

Moodiness is common
 Puberty signals the beginning of adolescence and is accompanied by many changes, which are obvious. Hormonal, appearance, appetite and growth changes are but a few. Moodiness is common.

Teenagers normally traverse the ups and downs of their teen years and move into the stage of young adulthood around age 18, relatively unscathed.

However, some teens fall prey to emotional and behavioral difficulties that can impede their journey and, lacking help, even throw them dangerously off course.

A common such problem is depression. Depression is an alteration in mood. It can take the form of persistent sadness,

irritability, a vpathy and withdrawal. Depression can be patterns and appetite, either too much or too little. Trouble with attention, concentration and feelings of hopelessness may emerge.

Depression shouldn't be mistaken for changes in sleep, moodiness and disinterest common in many teens. It's time to worry if the depression persists and interferes with home life, relationships and academic achievements. Typically, in serious depression, there is a loss of self-esteem and even feelings of worthlessness.

A number of issues can create a vulnerability to depression during adolescence. Three possibilities are a very unhappy childhood, a family history of depressive illness, or a major loss. It's not uncommon for teens to develop mental health problems.

National statistics indicate that one in every five teens has

some type of mental health problem in any given year. The problem often takes the form of depression. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among teens, following car accidents and homicides. Every day, 14 young people commit suicide, one every 100 minutes.

Many attempt suicide

In the typical high school classroom, one boy and two girls have attempted suicide. Many studies show that adolescents who attempt suicide unsuccessfully are likely to try again.

What can be done? It's important for parents, teachers, coaches — and teens themselves — to keep this information in mind. Understanding and knowledge are key ingredients to any treatment or prevention program.

Watch for persistent mood changes, prolonged withdrawal, relinquishing of friendships, lack of laughter and presence of self-criticism. Be leery of alcohol and

drug use. Be available to invite teens to talk about their emotional health and problems. Attend professional presentations in schools, church or community groups that educate teens about depression and give resources on how/where/when to get help.

Professional speakers are readily available from local mental health clinics and school guidance and counseling offices. Consider talking with your family physician if you're concerned about a teenage family member and depression. And always take a teen's talk about suicide or comments about "I'd rather be dead" seriously. Happy kids don't joke about such matters.

Depression is serious. It can be treated successfully.

Teens, be sensitive to drastic major or persistent mood changes in your friends. Invite a friend who is always "down in the dumps" to talk with you or go on your own and speak to a

teacher or their or your own parents.

Parents, educate yourself about depression and other mental health concerns that your children will have, just as you would educate yourself about their needs for vaccinations, their readiness to take driver's education or teaching them to make reservations at a restaurant after the prom.

Don't overlook mental health issues. When in doubt, call a professional, even if just for an opinion.

Leonard J. McCulloch is a diplomate of the American Psychotherapy Association and is board certified as an expert in traumatic stress. He's on staff at the Erie Rehabilitation Services in Farmington Hills. His monthly column on mental health issues will appear in the Farmington Observer. He can be reached at 248-474-2763.

Lions Clubs help hearing impaired, too

By MARY RODRIGUE
 STAFF WRITER

The Lions Club, a service organization synonymous with helping the blind, has been quietly helping the deaf community for a number of years.

Thursday marked the 15th annual dinner and program on deafness and communication at Madonna University in Livonia, recognizing the financial support Lions Clubs in southeastern Michigan have given to the university's Office of Disability Resources.

The Farmington area Lions Club has been donating to the program every year.

"There are 62 clubs in Oakland and Macomb counties,"

explained Dick Carvell, a long-time Farmington Lion.

Lions Clubs have raised \$327,000 over 25 years for Madonna's programs, according to Sister Mary Francellone, the university's outgoing president. Staff provided tours of the newly renovated office of disability services prior to the dinner program.

The office was established in 1976 to provide academic support for deaf and hearing impaired students. Since it began, the population of deaf students at Madonna has grown from five to 120. These students are enrolled in a variety of academic majors and attend classes with the general 4,000-member

student body.

The disabled student population is diverse, including deaf, hearing impaired, blind, learning disabled, and students with physical or mobility problems.

The Lion's continued support makes the operation of special services, like sign language interpreting and in-class note-taking, possible.

"I guess when people think of the Lions, they think about the white canes campaign," said Carvell. "But we're about more than that."

During a parade of checks, Lions Clubs presented Madonna administrators Thursday with \$13,700 to continue their work.

Carvell said the Farmington

■ The Lions have raised \$327,000 over 25 years for Madonna's Office of Disability Services.

Lions Club is "down to 22 members, and probably only a dozen are real active."

The club meets the first and third Tuesday of the month, once at 7 p.m. for a dinner meeting at the American Table restaurant on Eight Mile Road and the second time for a business meeting at 7:30 p.m.

New members are welcome. For more information, call Dick Carvell at 478-6257.

FARMINGTON CLUB CIRCUIT

EXCHANGE CLUB

The Farmington Exchange Club will meet from noon to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 13, at the Brass Point Restaurant in Farmington Hills. Speaker: Joe

BNI

The Business Network International, Farmington Hills chapter, will meet 7-8:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 13, at the Grand Cafe in downtown Farm-

ington. The Northwest Farmington Hills chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 13 at 28552 Orchard Lake Road and the Farmington Hills TV Chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m. Friday, June 15 at Kerby's Koney Island,

21200 Haggerty Road in Northville. The regional office can be contacted at (810) 323-3800.

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