



**News from:**

**The N.E.W. Mental Health Connection**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 20, 2018**

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## **Sleep-Deprived Adolescents Have Message for Community: “Teens Need Zzz’s”** *Healthy Sleep Campaign is focus of this year’s May Mental Health Awareness Month*

The Northeast Wisconsin Mental Health Connection, in partnership with the Willems Student Marketing Team of Appleton, will kick off Mental Health Awareness Month on May 1 with a new public health campaign: “Dream On: Teens Need Zzz’s.”

The kickoff event, planned for 6:30 – 8 p.m., Tuesday, May 1, will be held at the Outer Edge Stage, 303 N. Oneida St., Appleton. The public is invited to attend.

The hour long program will feature a series of short talks by high school students and mental health professionals discussing a public health crisis facing teens today: inadequate sleep.

“Getting more sleep can literally save lives,” said Tyler Wyland, a senior at Appleton West High School, who helped develop the Dream On campaign as part of the Willems Student Marketing Team. “Our mental health – and physical health, depends on getting enough sleep. But we are a generation of sleep-deprived, over-extended, stressed-out teens.”

More than two-thirds of high school students in the U.S. are failing to get enough sleep on school nights, according to a 2016 study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Results show that 69 percent of surveyed students in grades 9 to 12 reported sleeping less than eight hours on an average school night. Teens who don’t receive enough sleep experience higher rates of depression.

Local Youth Behavioral Risk Survey data from the tri-county region show that teens who receive 5 or fewer hours of sleep (18 percent of high schoolers) experience the highest rate of depression (48%). Students who received 8 or more hours of sleep (only 30 percent) had the lowest rate of depression (14%).

“Sleep has a huge impact on mental health, and it also affects grades, athletic ability, driving safely and everything we do,” said Trevor Kislewski, a senior at Appleton East High School. “And there are lots of little things we can do to improve our sleep habits which is what this campaign is about. But first, we need to acknowledge the importance of sleep.”

During the kickoff event, the teens will be sharing their best “get more sleep” tips, such as developing a consistent bedtime schedule, putting away smart phones, and creating a comfortable sleep space, among other tips. The first 200 people at the event will receive a sleep resource kit, which will include a “Dream On” sleep mask.

The kickoff will also include a sneak peek at the student marketing team’s #ShowUsYourYawn billboard and social media campaign. The month-long campaign will engage students in the tri-county region to post images of yawns while sharing their favorite “get more sleep” tips.

“It’s going to be a lot a fun,” said Maddie Tesch, a senior at Appleton North High School. “Yawns are contagious so we will use them to spread messages about how we can all get more sleep.”

This is the sixth year that The Connection and member agencies have joined efforts to coordinate our community’s May Mental Health Awareness Month kickoff event, with a goal of improving the community’s mental health literacy, breaking down stigma, and creating a supportive and caring community for families and individuals affected by mental health challenges.

“This campaign is part of our larger initiative to improve youth mental health and go further upstream to prevent mental health problems before they start,” said Wendy Magas, project coordinator of The Connection’s Healthy Teen Minds project, a seven-year initiative to improve teen mental health in Outagamie, Winnebago and Calumet counties. “We know from an abundance of research that teens who get eight to 10 hours of sleep per night experience much better mental health, in addition to better overall wellness.”

### **About N.E.W. Mental Health Connection**

The Northeast Wisconsin Mental Health Connection is a nonprofit membership organization that serves as the backbone to a collective impact movement creating, disrupting, and continuously improving the mental health system-of-care in Northeast Wisconsin. The Connection brings people, agencies and providers together to drive innovative systemic change.