

Students do survey to identify needs

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By Cameron Fullam

Staff Writer

The stress of the pressure to succeed is among the top concerns of Lakota High School students, according to a recent survey.

Not having enough healthy opportunities to relieve that stress also ranks high in the survey, conducted in November by Youth in Philanthropy, a nonprofit group of students that raises money to benefit local young people.

In partnership with the Community Foundation of West Chester/Liberty, YIP conducted a needs assessment of all Lakota students in grades nine through 12 to identify problems, concerns and interests of students. The results will guide the group as it identifies funding opportunities to coincide with community needs.

"We are a group that wants to help youth, but we can't help them if we don't know what they need," said YIP Secretary Bethany Dibble, 16, a junior at Lakota East High School.

The survey asked students to rank a list of issues and activities that are important to them.

"What we found is that kids in Lakota do not have enough to do. Because they don't have anything to do, they are getting into things they shouldn't be doing," Dibble said.

An open-ended question on the survey asked what could be done to improve the area and make it more friendly to teens.

A few of the popular answers included: Teens need a place to hang out and have fun, more work opportunities, organized weekend activities and more college preparation activities.

And nearly 50 percent of students ranked teen discount nights as very beneficial.

In response, YIP has already coordinated with Lakota East and West to put on mixers after home football games on Friday nights. The events will be open to all Lakota students for a small fee and will include a DJ, dancing and games.

Throughout the winter months, Skatetown USA will open its doors to students on the second Friday of the month for special teen programming.

"Another one of the trends we saw that really caught us is that a lot of students do not feel safe. They see bullying as an issue," Dibble said.

The survey revealed 25 percent of students thought bullying was a very important issue, but only 14 percent thought it was important to youth in general.

As a result, YIP is co-sponsoring a program called Rachel's Challenge to address the issue of bullying at the beginning of the school year.

Dibble said YIP plans to conduct a needs assessment every two years.

The results

In their first question, students were asked to rank the importance of issues that concern them personally.

Thirty percent ranked stress and career/college pressure as very important, with 26 percent ranking it somewhat important.

Teen accidents, speeding and transportation issues came in second with 28 percent rating it as very important and 22 percent as somewhat important.

Coming in third was the negative adult perception of young people with 26 percent calling it very important and 21 percent calling it somewhat important.

When asked to rank the importance of the same issues concerning youth in general, students placed alcohol and drug abuse and smoking at the top of the list, though these issues ranked near the bottom of the results on the first question.

The discrepancy reveals students believe the issues they face personally are not shared by their peers. The perception is different from the reality, said Community Foundation Associate Director Melissa Benedict.

Stress about the future came in third in the second question.

The YIP survey also asked students to rank how much time they spend on specific activities.

According to the survey, listening to music, playing sports and going out for entertainment are the most frequent use of time for students.

The rarest use of time was participating in school clubs, faith-based activities and volunteering.

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