

Teen Empowerment for the Capital District

By Jenna Caputo

Today's teenagers experience more stress, anxiety and depression than any other generation on record. Recent research by psychologist Jean Twenge and the National Institute of Mental Health demonstrated this growing epidemic, reporting that depressive symptoms in teenagers increased 50% in girls and 21% in boys between 2012-2015. The 50% of college students experiencing "overwhelming anxiety" in 2011 increased to 62% in 2016 and the numbers continue to climb.

Capital District teens now have a new source for help. Simple Heart HealthSM, a Clifton Park-based company that offers health and wellness services for all ages, now has a Teen Empowerment Program. Their mission is to help our teens reduce stress, anxiety and depression through education, support, connection, self-care and purpose. This program offers a safe and loving space for teenagers



to acquire life-long skills that foster improved self-esteem and confidence, acquire an action plan, and help reduce these increasing feelings of stress and anxiety through a variety of modalities. The teens that participated in the summer program raved about the techniques they learned and reported through rating of feeling intensity that their feelings of depression and anxiety were reduced by 60% and stress was reduced by 76% after attending just one week of the summer program!

"I have been struggling with my mental health for years," says one high school participant. "I have dealt with anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and lack of self-esteem. At the beginning of the summer, I had recently gone through a major life change with which I was struggling to adapt. On the first day of camp I realized

what a comfortable and safe space it was. Throughout the weeks of the camp, I have noticed a definite difference in my mood, one I had before believed to be unattainable. I no longer wake up wondering what the point is and if I should get up at all. Instead, I feel much more motivated, positive and peaceful. This camp has taught me many things, but the most important of all is to be happy."

Another participant agreed with the confidence the group instilled. "It's a safe haven away from the world that just doesn't get it. The people leading the group have shown us it isn't wrong to open up about our pain and hurt. They are making a difference. I felt like I always had to keep to myself because no one knew the struggle I had gone through but that has changed. I have found people with similar struggles and experiences that I can understand and relate to."

Two programs are offered throughout the school year for both middle and high school students. Scholarships are available for families based on need. *Space is limited so pre-registration is required.* Visit www.SimpleHeartHealth.com/teen-empowerment for more details. ■



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