

YAC *from A1*



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Local youths listen to audience comments about mental health during Monday night's YAC town hall. Students had a chance to ask local professionals about issues affecting themselves and their peers.

address the array of issues that may arise.

"Many times that's the role of public health," said Brubaker, "is to think about all the different situations, circumstances, conditions and environments that we have in our communities and how that sets the stage for how mental health problems and crises develop in our community."

Youths also asked what role peers themselves could play in reaching out to those experiencing mental anguish.

Panelists recommended talking to a trusted adult or those with training or experience in the

related area, though also emphasized the utility of simply lending a shoulder or an ear to a friend.

"Sometimes we just need to know that we're not alone and that the feelings or whatever we're struggling with isn't just us being crazy — it's us responding normally to stressors in our lives," said audience member Ali Canino, a therapist at South Lane Mental Health.

Students in the audience raised the issue of mandatory reporters as a possible barrier to talking to an adult.

Hampton recommended asking an adult directly if they are a

mandatory reporter to determine whether or not to share certain information.

"And I don't want to diminish that barrier or concern at all because it's very real," said Herington, "but I think that there is a reason those laws are in place — and that's to protect the youth from situations of abuse and neglect. So while there might be some temporarily tough times, if we don't intervene in a situation that's abusive, it persists over a longer period of time."

The stigma particular to teens surrounding mental health issues was also cited by the audi-

ence as a formidable barrier to seeking help.

Brubaker encouraged students to look out for one another. He acknowledged the possible effectiveness of asking a peer to reach out for help, "however research shows it's much more likely for someone to access services of many kinds if people reach in," he said. "We need to be pretty persistent. And I would say that's an expression of care. ... It's not just the person who is suffering's job exclusively to get help. It's our job also."

In identifying mental health issues they saw as most salient, youths

listed eating disorders, pressure from social media, anxiety, depression, misconceptions about mental health and a lack of self-care knowledge as the most notable issues among their peers.

Students and school district staff also raised the prospect of improving access to resource information within the district and Sands pointed to an overarching need for systemic improvement.

"Our current children's system ... is not in a good place. It doesn't work the way it should be working right now," he said. "I think locally we do a good job, but at the state level for those kids that are really, really struggling ... there's not a lot of resources."

As the event finished, panelists noted that the town hall itself was a therapeutic instrument in addressing local youth mental health issues.

"There's hope in this world, right? This is amazing to see the kids speak from the heart," said Dudley. "It just blew me away to see this on their young shoulders, that they have decided to also put this on their plate."

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Readers vote for the top three from the five that received the most nominations in each category.

FOOD & DINING

- Appetizer/Small Plate _____
- Asian Cuisine _____
- BBQ _____
- Best Restaurant _____
- Breakfast _____
- Brunch _____
- Burger _____
- Burrito _____
- Dessert _____
- Family Restaurant _____
- Fast Food _____
- Mexican _____
- Pizza _____
- Restaurant Atmosphere _____
- Restaurant Service _____
- Salsa _____
- Sandwiches _____
- Seafood _____
- Steak _____
- Taco _____
- Vegetarian/Vegan _____

DRINKS

- Bar _____
- Bloody Mary _____
- Cocktail _____
- Coffee _____
- Craft Brew _____
- Happy Hour _____
- Margarita _____
- Wine Selection _____

HOME SERVICES

- Carpet Cleaner _____
- Contractor _____
- Electrician _____
- Estate Liquidator _____
- Handyman _____
- Internet Service Provider _____
- Landscape Service _____
- Pest Control _____
- Plumber _____

- Self Storage _____

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Accountant _____
- Attorney _____
- Bank/Credit Union _____
- Bookkeeper _____
- Bank Teller _____
- Computer Help/Repair _____
- Financial Planner _____
- Insurance _____
- Mortgage Lending _____
- Photography _____
- Publisher/Publishing Company _____
- Real Estate Office _____
- Real Estate Agent _____
- Tailoring/Alterations _____

WELLNESS & BEAUTY

- Acupuncturist _____
- Barber Shop _____
- Day Spa _____
- Dental Office _____
- Dentist _____
- Denturist _____
- Hair Salon _____
- Health Club _____
- Hearing Aide Provider _____
- Manicure/Pedicure _____
- Massage Therapist _____
- Medical Facility _____
- Medical Professional _____
- Optometrist _____
- Pharmacy _____
- Stylist _____

SHOP LOCAL

- Art Supply Store _____
- Antiques _____
- Appliances _____
- Books _____
- Clothes _____
- Convenience Store _____

- Gift Store _____
- Grocery Store _____
- Furniture _____
- Home Improvement Store _____
- Garden Nursery _____
- Florist _____
- Jewelry _____
- Pet Supplies _____
- Thrift Store _____
- Kids Clothing _____

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto Body & Paint _____
- Auto Mechanic _____
- Auto Parts Store _____
- Auto Repair _____
- Car Dealership _____
- Car Detailer/Wash _____
- Oil Change _____
- Tire _____
- Used Car Dealership _____

ENTERTAINMENT

- Art Gallery _____
- Golf Course _____
- Museum _____
- Musician _____
- Public Art Display _____
- Live Music Venue _____
- Performing Arts Group _____
- Performance Venue _____
- Indoor Entertainment _____

COMMUNITY

- Early Child Learning _____
- Bed & Breakfast _____
- Hotel/Hostel _____
- Place to Volunteer _____
- Retirement Community _____
- Service Club _____
- Support Group _____
- Theatre _____

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