

## Teen depression can be serious

by the American Counseling Association

A serious, but often overlooked problem for many teens today is depression. It's far more common than most parents realize, and far more serious than most parents want to admit. Teen depression can lead to a variety of problems, with suicide at the top of that list.

Deciding whether your teenager is depressed is not an easy task. Most teens are "moody" at times. Teens face hormonal and physical changes, the stress of school and jobs, relationship issues with peers and a variety of other pressures that can leave them stressed and uncommunicative.

But the most serious form of depression, usually described as teenage depressive disorder, is more than just being moody. It's persistent feelings of depression that interfere with the teen's ability to function normally. And it does have certain warning signs:

- Previously good grades slipping
- A dramatic change in attitude
- A radical shift in your child's identity
- A major change in friends
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Withdrawing from friends and family activities and becoming uncommunicative.

While none of these behaviors alone mean your child is

suffering from severe depression, when you see one or more it signals a need to pay more attention to what he or she is facing.

Since virtually every teen tends to hold back on sharing too much with a parent, it takes effort to find out what's going on. Ask questions anyhow. Ask about friends, school and current activities. Be persistent. Your child may resent the intrusion, but you have a responsibility to know what's happening in his or her life.

It also helps to be more involved. Try spending more time with your teen. Simple things like family dinners, or encouraging friends to be invited to the house, can help open doors and show your care.

The most important thing is to not ignore any warning signs. Studies report about only one-third of clinically depressed teens are actually diagnosed.

If you suspect problems, talk to adults who know your teen, from teachers to school counselors to sports coaches. If they have also noticed potential problems, seek help. Your school counselor, family physician or local mental health organization can usually offer suggestions on counseling professionals specializing in teen issues.

Teen depression is not just a "phase" that will be outgrown. Ignoring it can leave your teen's life hanging in the balance.

## Grants offered to cut teen car crashes

Here is a sad fact: Nothing kills more teenagers than car crashes.

State Farm Insurance wants to change that. So this school year the company is again challenging Oregon's young drivers to creatively educate their peers about the true risks of getting behind the wheel.

"Shift into Safety" offers high schools grants of \$1,000 to \$5,000 to fund campaigns that will help change teens' attitudes and actions in the driver's seat.

"Fatal crashes among young drivers are declining, which is good news, but we've still got a long way to go," said Harold Gray, State Farm's Senior Vice President, Pacific Northwest

Zone. "We want teens to lead the way in educating and motivating their peers."

The numbers are compelling. Car crashes are the leading cause of death among U.S. teens. Young drivers are four times more likely to get into a car crash than older drivers. And the risk is especially high for 16-year-olds.

The company introduced "Shift into Safety" last year and awarded grants to 47 high schools. Students tackled subjects from distractions to drivers' education. State Farm is looking for campaigns that motivate young drivers to grasp the risk and put safety first.

Any group within a school can apply for a grant, from an

individual class to a student club.

Applications are due by October 26, 2007. State Farm will announce grant winners in December, and campaigns must be completed by the end of the 2007-2008 school year. Public and private high schools within State Farm's six-state Pacific Northwest Zone — Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington — are eligible.

For applications and rules, contact Jeff Aeschliman, 550 Hawthorne Ave SE, Salem, OR 97301 or 503-463-3829 or jeff.aeschliman.c85n@statefarm.com.

## Helping to carry the load good for kids

Children who regularly do chores learn to feel valued and to accept responsibility. Positive skills such as helping, sharing, and showing concern for others can be learned when children participate in household tasks. They also gain self-respect and learn how to master different tasks. If they learn that certain jobs depend on them, they know they are contributing to the family.

Chores should be part of family life, not a punishment. When everyone pitches in, there is more free time to enjoy life and each other. Very young children can begin by helping put toys away. Even if your older children didn't begin learning to help early in life, it's never too late to start. When involving children:

- Allow your children to take part in decision making. Divide responsibilities equally and fairly.

- Compile a short, simple, and clear list of who does what. If your child doesn't do his designated tasks, don't do them for him. Decide beforehand, as a family, what the consequences will be. Reminders may be needed. A chore chart is one way to keep track of chores. Children can check off what's done and see what's left.

- Give assignments that are age-appropriate. Make sure you show children how to do a job the first time. Break larger jobs into parts. Don't tell your 12-year-old to do the laundry without first showing him how to sort the clothes, operate the washer, select the proper drying cycle, and fold the laundry.

- Keep safety in mind. Make sure the task does not pose a risk of harm to the child.

- Avoid giving your child the same old job every week. Variety gives youngsters different experiences.

- Don't complain if your child doesn't do it "right." He'll be less eager to help out. Rarely will any child do a job as well as first as a parent might. Be sure not to redo a child's work; this can discourage future efforts.

- Put work before fun to get children motivated. Set aside a time for work and give advance notice of upcoming work periods. This will help children plan other activities around home responsibilities.

- Children — particularly as they grow older — usually are capable of doing more than we ask, so don't be afraid to assign more than one task. However, do remember to balance work with play.

- Remember to say thank you. We all want to be appreciated for our efforts.

Source: Denise Rennekamp, Extension associate, OSU.



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## Area 4-Hers shine at Oregon State Fair

Following are partial results from the 4-H competition at the 2007 Oregon State Fair. Due to space limitations, only results within *The Independent's* circulation area are included.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

**Photography, Sr, Landscape: White Award** — Juliana Pelster, Vernonia.

**Photography, Int, People: Blue Award** — Eli Lee-Wuollet, Rainier; Maria Pelster, Vernonia.

### FOODS & NUTRITION

**Foods, Ph 1-3, Cookies (bar, drop, or no bake): Blue Award** — Darren Crape, Rainier; Kristi Crape, Rainier, and Nicole Glass, Vernonia.

**Foods, Ph 7-9, Yeast Breads: Blue Award** — Marissa Clement, Vernonia.

**Foods, Ph 7-9, Yeast Bread product, using special: Blue Award** — Marissa Clement, Vernonia.

### SHEEP

**Crossbred Meat Breeds, color incl., Yearling Ewe: Blue Award** — Robbie Greisen, Scappoose; Chelsea Yarbor, St. Helens; Katie Tatman, Vernonia.

**Sheep Showmanship, Senior: Blue Award** — Robbie Greisen, Scappoose; Chelsea Yarbor, St. Helens; Katie Tatman, Vernonia.

Please see page 23