

Volunteers SPIN a web of support for teens

Volunteers are people who make a difference in their community by giving of their time and expertise. Brandon Suicide Prevention Implementation Network (SPIN) is a network of volunteers interested in helping to prevent suicide. Three years ago a SPIN steering committee, formed to explore ways to address issues of concern to youth, recommended holding a Youth Wellness Day for Brandon School Division's grade 10 students.

SPIN volunteers took up the challenge to create an event with good speakers, be innovative, fun and relevant to 550 teens. They had to fund raise (\$10,000 was needed to pay for the event), hire speakers, book the Keystone Centre, arrange lunch time entertainment and food.

SPIN's first 'Power of One' Youth Wellness Day took place in May 2004, and students encouraged organisers to make it an annual event.

Power of One 2005 followed a similar format with organisers involving students in the planning to ensure the event addresses issues of priority to teens. At the 2006 forum speakers addressed bullying, binge drinking, respect, depression/suicide, relationships/dating.



Organising committee volunteers: L-R Elaine Arvisais, Bob Hamilton, Jennifer Gallant, Kathy Foley, Krista Pedlow, Stephane Touzin, Melody Foster, Chris Brown. Missing from photo: Don Hamilton, Dave Inglis.

There are nearly 100 volunteers involved in Youth Wellness Day. This includes Neelin High School students in the Marketing and Promotions Class; they put together a fund-raising package sent to prospective donors (a new initiative which made fundraising easier).

SPIN's approach to suicide prevention for youth involves teaching them how to find solutions to adversity and stress that do not put their lives at risk.

SPIN volunteers are helping to support and build resilience in our community's youth by providing a forum to express concerns and needs.

Depression/Suicide Responses from Students at Youth Wellness Day:

Do you know someone who is struggling with depression?

Yes: 58% No: 42%

Have you ever known anyone who has attempted suicide?

Yes: 67% No: 33%

Manitoba Child and Youth Suicide Statistics, 2005

25 youth died by suicide in 2005

12 females, 13 males – four children aged 8 to 11, nine youth aged 12-14, twelve youth aged 15-17.

13 youth resided on aboriginal reserves, 6 resided in Winnipeg, 6 resided in other Manitoba communities.