Eleven percent of Colorado high schoolers have made a plan for suicide in the last 12 months, and Holyoke Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) junior high and high school students think it's time to do something about that.

FCA is hosting a suicide prevention training workshop and a movie night—both free and open to the public—to create awareness and understanding about suicide.

Community members and students age junior high and older are invited to watch the movie "To Save a Life" at the Peerless Theatre in Holyoke Wednesday, Feb. 29 from 7-9 p.m.

The movie is a dramatic portrayal of how one teenager reacts after a childhood friend commits suicide. This popular all-star athlete changes his perspective on life, reaching out to others who might be on the brink of suicide.

Two weeks after the movie night, everyone is invited back for a suicide prevention training workshop Wednesday, March 14 from 7-9 p.m. at the Peerless.

The QPR Gatekeeper Training (Question, Persuade, Refer) will be led by Maranda Miller, suicide prevention program coordinator with Rural Solutions in Sterling.

"Suicide is something that's highly preventable," said Miller. "It's critical that as many people that can be trained should be trained."

A gatekeeper is anyone trained to recognize a suicide crisis and know how and where to find help. Most people contemplating suicide—whether because of depression or some other significant problem—will turn to a friend, a family member, a parent, a clergyperson or physical health professional instead of seeking the help of a mental health professional.

“Every person has an internal struggle at some point in their life, which is often hard to share with others. By keeping that pain inside, sometimes people find comfort in death,” said FCA student leader Molly Brandt.

“It’s vital to know how to handle suicidal friends, because in all reality, you can never tell what someone is dealing with beneath the surface, so you should always be open minded and prepared,” added Brandt.

Even though the teenage FCA group is hosting the event, they hope people of all ages from every walk of life will attend the training. Suicide can happen to anyone, both young and old.

Colorado has the sixth-highest rate of suicide in the nation, with 867 deaths in 2010. The largest number of suicides is among men, ages 35-54, and men over age 75 are at the highest risk of suicide.

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people, ages 10-34.

“Suicide prevention is everybody’s business,” said Miller.

Anyone who is in routine contact with a distressed individual stands the best chance of intervening, so everyone needs to learn these skills. Miller hopes once people have had the training, they will feel empowered to ask the questions they need to when someone is thinking about suicide.

This is also a great opportunity for parents and their teenage children to go through the training together, said Miller.

Pairing the training with the “To Save a Life” movie is a good way to give a visual picture of what suicide prevention can look like and the impact each individual can have. “‘To Save a Life’ really does show what one person can do,” said Miller.

“The movie really opens your eyes to the things going on around you,” said FCA student leader Brooke Parker. “We like to say that suicide and partying and hurting don’t happen in our corner of the world, but there is nothing different about Holyoke than any other part of the world.”

“To Save a Life” makes one aware of the events going on, added Parker, and the suicide training gives the community a place to start in order to help.

According to the 2009 Colorado Youth Behavioral Survey results, almost 14 percent of Colorado high school students have seriously considered attempting suicide during the last 12 months, and 11 percent actually made a plan for suicide.

These statistics are based on the entire state of Colorado—including Phillips County—so local youth are not considered to be statistically different from other Colorado youth.

The day before the training, Tuesday, March 13, Miller will be going through the More Than Sad program with grades 7-11 at Holyoke JR/SR High. This program focuses on teen depression and follows four teens with different depression problems.

Since depression is the number one risk factor for suicide, More Than Sad fits in well with the QPR suicide prevention training.

The information presented in the training March 14 is easy to understand and reinforced by a QPR booklet and card complete with warning signs, methods to encourage a person to get help and a list of resources available in the community.

Anyone with questions about the training should call Miller at Rural Solutions, 970-526-3616. To contact the local FCA group, call Darci Tomky at 970-580-3272 or Brittany Krueger at 970-520-4437.

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