

# Dakota High School hosts first You Matter Week for mental health

Week included assembly, Mental Health Fair for wellness



Dakota High School hosted You Matter Week from May 9 to May 17, a week focused on improving mental health awareness. Pictured is the Rethink Your Drink sugar content table at the Mental Health Fair held on May 12, sponsored by Henry Ford Macomb Hospital. (PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE LANGE)

## The Macomb Daily

By [NICOLE TUTTLE](#) |

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The spirit week, assembly and fair held at Dakota High School this May held a higher purpose than prom and lessons as important as geometry: The lessons of mental health awareness.

Dakota High School held You Matter Week starting on May 9, which actually stretched into the week of May 16. It was sponsored by the Dakota Coalition Teen Council and student government and included a spirit week of color-themed dress days corresponding to mental health awareness, activities focused on stress relief, an assembly on suicide prevention and a Mental Health Fair.

Stephanie Lange, student assistant specialist, said that this is the first year that the two student groups have offered You Matter Week at the school, although each group has previously held mental health focused activities. You Matter Week was meant to be a more concentrated, campus-wide effort, and so the ideas and efforts of both groups combined, Lange said.

“We talked about it for years, but then COVID happened and other things took precedence. We made it a priority this year,” Lange said.

You Matter Week was scheduled to coincide with May is Mental Health Awareness Month, ahead of the last few days of school for seniors.

May 9 was Suicide Prevention and Awareness Day, with students encouraged to wear yellow to show support. Although May 10 was a teacher professional development day and no school was held, students were encouraged to wear orange to show support for ADHD Awareness Day. They were also encouraged to check Schoology for information on yoga, mindfulness and ways to win a gift card.

May 11 was Anxiety and Depression Awareness Day. Students were encouraged to wear green to show support. The day included the special activity of decorating terra cotta pots during lunch periods, and decorating outside at school with sidewalk chalk. Pot decorating proved popular, with all 200 pots available gone by the end of the school's three lunch periods, Lange said.

“The message that day was to have a hobby, an interest, and growing something that you are keeping alive in your house, being beneficial to mental health, like taking care of a plant,” Lange said, adding that the idea was student generated.

May 12 was Eating Disorders Awareness Day. Students were encouraged to wear purple to show support. The Mental Health Fair was also held on May 12, on the school's indoor track. Lange said that 850 students attended the health fair. The Mental Health Fair was repeated at Dakota High School's neighboring Ninth Grade Center on May 17.



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Mental Health Fair booths were designed to offer interactive displays, allowing students to become involved as they increased their mental health awareness. A few examples included Henry Ford Macomb Hospital's Rethink Your Drink sugar content table, Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) Education Project for Homeless Children and Youth's trivia table, and meditation stations with Kirsten Groppuso, the school librarian.



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“Michigan State University’s College of Osteopathic Medicine had a wheel spin to learn about vaping and the dangers,” Lange said. “The Marines were here and kids did pull-ups on the pull-up bar.”

A few of the many groups that offered interactive tables included KnowResolve: Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention, the Macomb County Health Department, Turning Point, CARE of Southeastern Michigan, and MISD.

“Everyone got a punch card that participated in the fair. You had to have meaningful interaction, at least six booths. You get your card punched by the person at the booth. Once you get six punches, you are eligible for the door prize,” Lange said, adding that students also participated in a raffle for gift cards.

May 13 was OCD Awareness Day. Students were encouraged to wear blue to show support. The school’s media center offered meditation during lunch periods.

An assembly was held on May 16 focused on suicide prevention, featuring KnowResolve: Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Founder and Executive Director Dennis Liegghio, and a student speaker.

Lange said that the student groups are planning to make You Matter Week a traditional event at the school.

“We really felt we did it well this year and we will do it again next year,” Lange said.