Dear Parent or Guardian: 11/29/2016

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions—difficult for youths, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression—which is treatable—is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

To proactively address these issues, Brier Terrace Middle School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program has proven to be successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention program listed by SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices that addresses suicide risk and depression, while reducing suicide attempts. In a randomized control study, the SOS High School Program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

* To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
* To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
* To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicidality in themselves or a friend
* To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns
* To help students know whom in the school they can turn to for help, if they need it

During the month of December, your child will participate in a Health class in which the SOS program will be presented. At the end of the lesson, each child will complete a screening form. If a student indicates they would like to talk to support staff, their school counselor will contact them within 24 hours to address any questions/concerns they may have regarding the program or its content.

We are enclosing a copy of the Parent Newsletter and Referral Resource List (listed on the back) so that you have information and resources about depression and its related risks.

If you do **NOT** wish your child participating in SOS Middle School Program in school, please complete the enclosed form and return it to Alderwood Middle School to the attention of the PE/Health Department. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program. If you choose to opt out, then your student will participate in an alternate assignment which more generally focuses on the signs of depression/stress. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the PE/Health Department or School Counselors at 425-431-7579.

Sincerely,

Brier Terrace Middle School PE/Health Department and School Counselors

**Student Opt Out**

**for the SOS Program**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, do not give permission for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian Name of Student

to participate in the SOS “Time to ACT” Program, to take place during the month XXX during

their regularly scheduled Health/PE class. I understand they will be participating in an alternate assignment which more generally focuses on the signs of depression/stress.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

**Student Opt Out**

**for the SOS Program**

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