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YOUTH TO YOUTH CONFERENCE PROVIDES ALL DAY INTERACTIVE LEARNING

EXPERIENCE FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE STUDENTS

MERCED – On April 1, 2017, Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services will open the doors of El Capitan High School to 350 6th-12th grade students of Merced County. The event will provide a safe place to create new friendships, knowledge of local resources for youth, and hours of activities to include games and entertainment.

The conference is put on by high school students who are trained the day prior. Training includes knowledge and skill development around small group facilitation, leadership and team building activities. High school students that are approved through their schools to participate will receive community service hours for their commitment as leaders of this conference.

On Saturday, April 1, high school students will welcome all 6th-8th grade students to the Youth to Youth conference. The day will start with opening ceremonies followed by small group sessions to facilitate icebreakers and “getting to know you” activities. Students will then attend workshops on topics of their choosing to learn and explore their interests. All workshops are provided by local youth oriented programs and organizations. There will be 14 workshops that youth can choose from. Half of them will focus on creative life such as art, movement and dance. The other half will focus on youth-specific issues such as education planning, restorative justice, community activism, self-concept, and the prevention of unhealthy behaviors.

“Many students in our communities do not know how to get involved or what they can get involved with in their community. We use Youth to Youth as a platform to engage youth with the services and programs that are available,” said Christopher Jensen, coordinator of the conference. “The conference will continue with comedy skits, additional small group sessions, and a dance to conclude the event. The event is really powerful. It creates an easily accessible safe place for youth from all of our communities to build relations with one another, discuss youth specific issues and celebrate with each other. This conference can be a life changing experience and provide a lasting impression for youth from every background. One of the most exciting things to observe is these groups of youth that start the day off as total strangers become best of friends over the course of the event.”

The Youth to Youth conference is a free event which will start at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 9 p.m. Conference attendees will be provided with a conference t-shirt, lunch, and dinner. Registration forms can be found at each school within Merced County. Pre-registration will close on March 17, but students and parents may come the day of the conference as a walk-in until the event is full. Registration forms can also be downloaded from the Merced County website under Substance Use Disorder Prevention Programs. For more information, please contact Youth to Youth Coordinator, Christopher Jensen, at (209) 381-6880 or through email at Christopher.jensen@co.merced.ca.us.