



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Partnership of the Ozarks Selected by Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation to Pilot teen Mental Health First Aid in Springfield

Feb. 27, 2019 (SPRINGFIELD, Mo.) – [Community Partnership of the Ozarks \(CPO\)](#), in partnership with [Springfield Public Schools](#), is participating in the country's first teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) pilot program. CPO was selected as one of eight sites across the country by the National Council for Behavioral Health and Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation who are piloting the course in high schools this spring, making it the first training of its kind developed for high school students in the U.S. The pilot will occur with students at Kickapoo High School this spring.

"We are thrilled to introduce teen Mental Health First Aid to our community," said Chris Davis, Vice-President of Prevention and Youth Support. "The program will teach students to recognize and respond when their friends are experiencing the early stages of a mental health or addiction problem."

tMHFA is an in-person training designed for high school students to learn about mental illnesses and addictions, particularly how to identify and respond to a developing mental health or substance use problem among their peers. Similar to CPR, students learn a 5-step action plan to help their friends who may be facing a mental health problem or crisis, such as suicide.

The course specifically highlights the important step of involving a responsible and trusted adult. To ensure additional support for students taking the training, Springfield Public Schools has also trained many school staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid, for adults working with young people.

"We're excited for Kickapoo High School to be one of the first high schools across the country to participate in teen Mental Health First Aid," said Linda Rosenberg, MSW, president and CEO of the National Council for Behavioral Health. "Teens trust their friends, so they need to be trained to recognize signs of mental health or substance use problems in their peers. The number one thing a teen can do to support a friend dealing with anxiety or depression is to help the friend seek support from a trusted adult."

"This will be a great benefit to our students and will seamlessly integrate with the many other efforts we have been implementing at SPS to promote mental health awareness," explained Rhonda Mammen, SPS director of counseling services. "Equipping our students and staff to recognize early warning signs is a key step in supporting students who are struggling and connecting them with the help they need to live positive, healthy lives. We will begin training our sophomores next week so they will become the first students in the country certified in tMHFA."

"Through this pilot, Springfield Public Schools is taking an important step towards ensuring their students are able to recognize when a friend or peer might be struggling and to feel confident that they know what to do to help," said Cynthia Germanotta, president and co-founder of Born This Way Foundation. "Knowing how to spot the signs that someone in our lives is experiencing a mental health challenge and understanding how we can support that person is a basic life skill we all need to have – especially teenagers."



tMHFA is an evidence-based training program from Australia. The National Council adapted the training with support from Born This Way Foundation and Well Being Trust. The pilot program is being evaluated by researchers from Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health to assess its effectiveness. The training will be made available to the public following analysis of the pilot study.

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ABOUT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OF THE OZARKS

The mission of Community Partnership of the Ozarks is to facilitate and promote the building of resilient children, healthy families, and strong neighborhoods and communities through collaboration, programming and resource development. For more information on the Partnership's collaborative efforts and programs, visit www.cpozarks.org.

ABOUT SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Springfield Public Schools (SPS) is Missouri's largest school district, representing 25,000 students and nearly 4,000 employees. SPS has built a reputation of academic excellence rooted in a belief that the learning experience should be engaging, relevant and personal - for every learner, every day. In addition to traditional learning environments across 35 elementary schools, an intermediate school, nine middle schools, five high schools, a center for gifted education and three early childhood centers, SPS collaborates with community partners to offer more than a dozen choice programs that meet the diverse needs of each student and their community. For more information, visit www.sps.org.

ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID USA

Mental Health First Aid USA is a collaboration between the National Council for Behavioral Health and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.