Dear Parent or Guardian,

The adolescent years are marked by a great roller-coaster ride of emotions – difficult for students and their parents. It’s easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) does occur in some adolescents. 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, Forsyth School District is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program. The program aims to increase help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend. SOS is listed in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices and 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 goal 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

This will be implemented in the Middle School & High School buildings, starting with 6th Grade. We will do the presentation in an assembly-like setting. We will watch the student training video together, learning the steps for getting help through the simple acronym **ACT: A**cknowledge that you or your friend has a problem, express that you **C**are, and **T**ell a trusted adult. Once completed, the students will fill out a response card, indicating if they would like to speak to staff about what we learned. Once a counselor sees the student further steps may be taken to screen for depression or suicidal ideation. If your child is screened, we will notify you of the screening results, and resources will be available to you if you need them.

We are inclosing a copy of the Parent Newsletter and Resource List so that you have information and resources about depression and its related risks.

**If you DO NOT want your child participating in the SOS Prevention Program in school, please complete the enclosed form and return it to the school counselor. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.**

Sincerely,

Mallory Richardson Jayme Voliva Jessica Woody

High School Counselor Middle School Counselor Elementary Counselor

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I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, DO NOT give permission for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program, to take place on MONTH, DAY, TIME.

Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_