

# Faith focused Family Night coming to Dakota



A Family Night Out event at Dakota High School on April 16 will focus on the subject of students and religious faith. Pictured is Dakota High School Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange at a prior Family Night Out event. Photo courtesy of DAKOTA HIGH SCHOOL

By Nicole Tuttle , For **The Macomb Daily**

Posted: 03/31/18, 9:21 AM EDT |



Dakota Coalition Teen Council will host a community discussion and student panel on the subject of student religion and faith on April 16 at Dakota High School. Pictured are students who participated in a similar Family Night Out event in 2017 that focused on race relations. Photo courtesy of STEPHANIE LANGE

Faith and religious focus during the teen years is the tough topic that Dakota High School's Coalition Teen Council plans to bring to the forefront of the community's consciousness in April.

A Family Night Out event, “Religion Matters: Students and their Faith in 2018” will be held on April 16 at Dakota High School in Macomb Township. A panel will discuss the influence of religion in their lives and how it affects aspects such as education, relationships and families. This will be followed by a question and answer section and smaller table discussions.

“Part of it is to make us, everyone, learn a lot about different religions and faith, and how it impacts the teens and their journey to graduation,” Dakota High School Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange said.

The free event will be held in the atrium of Dakota High School from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Free dining is included. RSVP is due by April 14 by calling 586-723-2872 or emailing slange@cvs.k12.mi.us. The event is open to the community and students in grades six to 12 who are accompanied by a parent.

Lange said the panel is not meant to have a representative of every religion but to help foster discussions about faith, and that those selected were necessarily volunteers based on members of Dakota’s Coalition Teen Council. Four students and two parents were confirmed as of March 23 to participate in the panel, including those who are Jehovah’s Witness, Muslim, Catholic and atheist.

“Through the panel, they learn about different religions and how kids feel. At a public school it is not like religion is a part of everyday programming...” Lange said.

Having tackled the tough topic of an honest discussion of race relations last year, the Dakota Coalition Teen Council found faith and religious matters to be the next logical step in a series of Family Night Out topics based around the idea of diversity, according to Lange.

“Last year we covered race relations and the kids felt like the next thing to do was religion,” Lange said, adding that students felt the teenage years are a time when a lot of faith is formed.

Teens also find peer groups a difficult venue in which to discuss their religious convictions.

“For a lot of kids, it’s difficult during the teen years. Some have a faith community and never speak about it, it’s not cool to have faith or to belong to a church. Some of the kids felt strongly about their faith being an important part of their development and they should talk more about it. It’s something people don’t talk about and they thought this is a cool thing to do if we want to do it and make it happen,” Lange said.

Dakota has been supportive of the activities of the coalition teen council and that it is not against the rules of a public school to have clubs based on religion. In addition, the larger Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families has interfaith partnerships, according to Lange.

“I let the students choose several different directions they can do it in, whatever their comfort level is. It is understanding the tenets of their faith. What are the key things of being a Muslim, like the key parts of their religion and how do they feel that gives them support or guidance or direction in their life...” Lange said.