

Parents, middle school age girls invited to good decisions event at Dakota HS



Jynil Schneider, prevention director for Macomb Family Services, and her daughter, Nicole. Schneider will focus on substance abuse prevention, peer pressure and related areas. Submitted photo

By [Maryanne MacLeod](#), The Macomb Daily

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A better understanding of Michigan law could have prevented three L'Anse Creuse High School North students currently facing felony charges and possible sex offender registration for taking and distributing a sexually explicit photograph of an underage girl.

So said Cindy Williams, media specialist for Chippewa Valley Schools and a presenter at this year's Girls Making Awesome Decisions, which will be held 5:30 – 8:45 p.m. Jan. 30 at Dakota High School. The event, which targets middle school age-girls and their parents, is open to the public. A \$5 registration fee to cover the cost of pizza is required by Jan. 23.

Because Michigan does not have a specific sexting law on the books, Williams said, teens accused of taking and distributing sexually explicit photographs are charged under the state's child pornography laws.

"The purpose of these laws is to reform real criminals," Williams said. "They are not necessarily fair to young kids. But they need to know their stupid decisions could end up costing them."

Designed as a girls' night out event with age-appropriate activities including a dance team and drumming circle for students in the 4th-8th grades and the adults in their lives — dads are welcome, too — G-MAD is sponsored by the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families and Dakota High School's Student Assistance Program.

Photo editing in the media and the effect it has on a pre-teen girl's body image is just one of the topics that will be covered. The agenda also features fun activities that foster healthy relationships, teach healthy body maintenance and emotion management.

"The primary reason we decided on this age group was their vulnerability," said Charlene McGunn, coalition director. "They're forming attitudes, starting to separate from parents and taking in all sorts of information they can't process. The effort is to truly engage them at this age. And maybe teach some basic skills."

Parents will be empowered with tech-savvy tips and tricks to help them stay on top of kids' social media accounts.

“Social media is a huge concern for parents,” Williams said. “Students have all these tools in front of them and they don't realize their power. How they use them stems from how they feel about themselves and their relationships with others.”

Jynil Schneider, prevention director for Macomb Family Services, will be on hand to teach on substance abuse prevention, peer pressure, stress management and good decisions making.

“This is the time when kids are getting cell phones and hooking up to social media,” Schneider said. “It's very important to go over safety procedures with their children, know they're passwords and check their history.”

In addition to being a teacher and mentor, Schneider will also be bringing her own middle school age daughter to the event, Nicole.

Her hope is simple but compelling: “I'd definitely like for her to come out of this with a greater sense of self esteem, a stronger ability to deal with peer pressure and better coping skills,” Schneider said. “It's one thing when mom tries to educate your on something. But sometimes it resonates a little more when the message comes from someone else.

To register, visit chippewavalleyschools.org and follow the links to the registration page.