



# SUMMIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To Whom It May Concern,

AIR's *In Their Shoes* is a powerful and thought provoking event which allowed students at Summit High School to experience the impact of suicide in a very real and personal way.

At Summit High School we embraced *In Their Shoes* by having a wide range of students and teachers participate in the program. The Mental Health Awareness Club, *Students Helping Students*, raised funds to bring *In Their Shoes* to our school and then held a shoe drive to add to the traveling exhibit. The club members collected, cleaned and tagged shoes in order to keep the exhibit growing and current. It was a terrific way for teenagers to not only give their energy and resources to the program, but to connect with it and help be a part of the preventative movement.

*In Their Shoes* was a tremendously well received event at Summit High School. The entrance atrium was lined with shoes tagged with real issues teens face. Above the shoes were displays with resources and supports for students in need put together by the Student Assistance Counselor and the Mental Health Awareness Club. Most important, Tricia and volunteers from AIR were set up to talk with students about teen suicide and therapy dogs were on hand to help relieve stress. Tricia was kind, supportive and offered a wealth of knowledge. She provided much needed resources and awareness to our students with a table set up with pamphlets, information and suicide prevention bracelets for students to have as a reminder to support others and how to seek help. After petting the dogs many students walked away saying "it was the highlight of their week." The therapy dogs brought our community closer, erased boundaries, and got students talking about an often taboo subject.

*In Their Shoes* also helped to rally our teachers. Educators from all disciplines brought their classes down to walk through the exhibit and talk to the counselors. Some took this as an opportunity to incorporate the event into their curriculum - art teachers had students drawing shoes, creative writing teachers had students writing the story behind the shoes, and Chemistry teachers talked about the brain development and science behind depression. It was a unique opportunity for teachers of all disciplines to connect to the event and to make a difference in the lives of their students.

At Summit High School students, faculty, and parents are still talking about *In Their Shoes* as a most effective way to bring to light the issue of teen suicide. With many of our youth feeling alone, misunderstood, and helpless, this event offered them a chance to see they are not alone; there are people who care, and there are resources to help.

Sincerely,

Amy Herber  
Student Assistance Counselor