

PTO campaign helps students deal with stress

Story & photo by S.J. Grady
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs Office

With Advanced Placement tests and final exams around the corner, Patch High School students were urged to laugh their test-associated anxieties away.

During the week of April 29 to May 3, the school hallways were plastered with posters extolling the benefits of laughter, while students sported bright green "Laugh More" buttons.

"We have over 600 individual exams being taken this year by approximately 250 students," said Baer, the PHS Parent Teacher Organization president.

"Typically, high school students are most stressed out the week before AP exams start. Hopefully, our Laugh More, Stress Less campaign got them into a more relaxed state of mind," she said.

Even though teachers have been preparing students for the tests since the first day of class, it can still be a stressful time, according to AP Biology teacher Stephanie Payne. "Students are going to have to run hard up until the very end. But, we've dealt with pressure all year round," she said of her class.

Senior Veronica Remsik said she was not stressed about her AP Biology test, but senior year in general. "Everything is so crazy and hectic. Things are happening so fast ... it feels like yesterday that we just started senior year." Expectations from teachers and parents add to the stress levels, she said.

The PTO partnered with the Josh Anderson Foundation and Active Minds to launch the week-long Laugh More, Stress Less initiative to educate high school students on the importance of stress management and the serious nature of anxiety disorders in the young adult population, PTO President Baer said.

"Kids don't always know how to reach out. They don't know who to talk to or where to go," Baer said.



PHS teacher Stephanie Payne goes over the topics that will be covered on the Advanced Placement test with her AP Biology class May 6. Payne asked the students to "pinky swear" that they would not cram before the exam. Instead, she gave them a week to focus on preparing for the test.

The Laugh More, Stress Less initiative addressed this.

It also tied into the PTO's year-long campaign to raise the student population's awareness in a variety of issues: suicide prevention, domestic violence, bully and cyberbully prevention, and drug and alcohol abuse.

High school is a crucial time to discuss these issues. "From ages 15-25 students establish habits and priorities for their daily lives and learn valuable coping skills that will assist them beyond high

school," Baer said.

"We have a population of students here who are presented with more challenges than normal — because they are overseas ... because their parents are deployed. If they are suffering from depression or thinking about suicide, they need to know they can reach out," she said.

For more information on the Josh Anderson Foundation, visit joshafoundation.org. For information on Active Minds, visit www.activeminds.org.

Successful school registration

Stephen Bencze, a civilian employee with the Army Space Command, registers sons Kyle, 11 (from left), and Conall, 13, for the upcoming school year with Böblingen Elementary/Middle School counselor Mary Supick April 23. During the Stuttgart Department of Defense Dependents Schools' registration drive held April 23-25, 1,922 students registering for school year 2013-2014. Early registration helps DODDS-Europe to obtain the appropriate resources for the coming school year. Funding, staffing authorizations and text book orders are based on enrollment and enrollment projections.

S.J. Grady



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