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Schools plan activities as part of National Suicide Prevention Week

National Suicide Prevention Week has a special meaning for Joan Butters of Moreno Valley.

Her 17-year-old daughter, Sara, took her own life in 2004, and Butters was left to pick up the pieces of a shattered life. Through the organization she founded – Suicide Awareness Requires Action – and by working with county officials and others, Butters has one thought in mind.

“My goal has always been to save just one mom from having to go through all of the pain and suffering that I have gone through, and I believe and know that my goal has been achieved,” said Butters.

As part of Suicide Prevention Week (Sept. 9 through Sept. 15), several Riverside County middle and high schools are planning events. The goal is to provide education and resources to teens, sending the message that help is available to those in need.

The following schools are participating: Beaumont High School, Glen View High School (Beaumont), Mountain View Middle School (Beaumont), Indio High School, Desert Mirage High School (Thermal), Norte Vista High School (Riverside), Arizona Middle School (Riverside), San Jacinto Valley Academy, Rancho Verde High School (Moreno Valley), San Geronimo Middle School (Beaumont).

The schools are taking part in the Crisis Intervention Prevention and Awareness Program, a year-long curriculum designed to raise awareness about issues that can lead to teen suicide and ways that students can help their peers seek crisis intervention resources.

“Many teens do not feel comfortable talking about issues such as depression and bullying. Bringing the topic out in the open and allowing youth to lead awareness activities will help create a more accepting environment on campus,” said Gina Cuevas, director of the HELPLine, which is part of Community Connect.

The program began three years ago. In addition to the high schools, eight middle schools will ultimately participate in the program. It is coordinated by the County of Riverside Department of Public Health – Injury Prevention Services – and funded by the Riverside County Department of Mental Health, Prevention and Early Intervention Program.

Suicide Awareness Requires Action (SARA) can be reached at www.sara-foundation.ning.com