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MEDIA CONTACT: Laura Oxley, ADHS Public Information: (602) 542-1094
Janey Pearl, ADHS Public Information: (602) 364-1201

Bright Spot for a Dark Issue

Teenage years are some of the most emotionally stressful as teens face greater responsibilities at school and in their personal lives. It is not surprising that suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for teens in Arizona. A new grant will enhance ADHS Division of Behavioral Health's efforts to change that statistic.

U.S. Health and Human Services just gave Arizona a \$1.5 million Garrett Lee Smith Grant to work with youth on suicide prevention in the next three years. Programs will include early intervention, referrals for mental health care and treatment, and outreach efforts.

"The truth is - 100% of suicide is preventable. There is always another option if people know where to look," said Acting Deputy Director Laura Nelson, MD. "This grant will help teach people what to watch for and how to help their friends and family."

This is the second time the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) chose ADHS for the award. Previously, the Division of Behavioral Health used \$1.2 million to address suicide prevention in southern Arizona and tribal communities. The suicide rate among Native Americans plunged to its lowest level, virtually half of what it was before the intervention began.

"We worked with local groups dedicated to preventing suicide within specific demographic groups," said Lisa Shumaker, ADHS Behavioral Health Services Prevention Program Manager. "Then we helped bring together similar groups from across the state to talk about what works and share ideas. It was incredibly successful."

In Arizona, overall suicide prevention efforts have made great strides. The age-adjusted suicide rate decreased by 13.0 percent from 15.4 suicides per 100,000 residents of the State in 2007 to 13.4 in 2008, resulting in the lowest suicide rate since 1990 according to the latest Vital Statistics report.

The Arizona Suicide Prevention Coalition (AzSPC) has been a close partner in the effort to reduce suicide in Arizona. They have co-sponsored trainings for professionals and community members on suicide awareness and prevention. ADHS/DBHS looks forward to continued collaboration with AzSPC in implementing efforts for suicide prevention among Arizona youth.

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