

The BMCHS Health and Wellness Program

This fall **Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School** launched its new **Health and Wellness Program**. The goal of the program is to educate students physically and emotionally as well as academically, in order for them to make appropriate lifelong choices. The program incorporates newly established procedures with existing policy guidelines.

The wellness initiative encompasses several areas of emphasis including random drug and alcohol testing, physical fitness, counseling services, social and emotional health and parental education. "Part of our mission statement focuses on developing the whole person," said Principal David Morton, "this includes providing a safe school environment while promoting an atmosphere of health and wellness."

Bishop McGuinness now employs a full time Health and Wellness Counselor to organize and manage the program. Jennifer Kelly is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who specializes in working with adolescents. "This year we are dedicating our focus and efforts on improving the health and wellness of our students and faculty," she said. "As the counselor on campus I am here to provide counseling services and facilitate support groups."

Kelly surveyed the students to determine interests and needs. Recently implemented programs include individual, family and crisis counseling; small group sessions for students who wish to discuss specific topics, such as grief, divorce, peer pressure or other areas of interest; and workshop training to create a peer mentoring program. Efforts are also being made to develop a committee to promote student awareness.

The Student Assistance Program (SAP) is made up of counselors from each grade, the campus minister and the Wellness counselor. They meet once a week to discuss any students who may be in need of extra support or guidance.

An after school intramural program has been implemented offering extracurricular physical activities. Events are held on a weekly basis. The physical activities will change from week to week, but are geared to meet

the needs and interests of all students. Recent activities include volleyball, kickball and flag football.

The faculty is also actively participating in the wellness program. Principal Morton initiated a semester long 'pedometer challenge' to all staff. Members were assembled in teams of 5 or more for a friendly competition on the greatest number of steps accumulated per team each week through December 19th. Teachers have been seen logging steps during lunch hours, planning periods, and on their personal time. Also, a free 45 minute exercise class is being offered every Wednesday at 3:45 pm.

Along with a strong student emphasis, the Health and Wellness Program offers opportunities to educate and inform parents regarding the issues surrounding today's teenager. Conferences and seminars featuring presentations by guest speakers will be offered throughout the school year. In addition, Ms. Kelly publishes a bi-monthly Health and Wellness newsletter for parents.



Peer Mentors Rose Faherty and Alex Lopez prepare for a meeting with the Health and Wellness Counselor.