



PRESS RELEASE

Longwood Central Schools

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District-wide Bullying/Teen Depression Program Held at Longwood Junior High School



MIDDLE ISLAND – Several hundred parents joined school administrators, teachers and counselors at Longwood Junior High School for an adults-only evening program with John Halligan, who shared his tragic story and insight into bullying, cyberbullying and youth depression. The nationally-renowned speaker has become a highly respected resource in these subjects. His 13-year old son took his life in 2003, after struggling with years of bullying and undiagnosed depression. Mr. Halligan’s program was meant to empower parents with strategies to take preventive actions with their children. He appealed to parents to monitor their children’s cell phones and computers. “It’s not a matter of ‘trust’ or ‘privacy;’ he told parents, it’s responsible parenting to know who your children’s friends are and what they are doing. Technology allows the bullying and the meanness to be anonymous, he said.

During assemblies for seventh and eighth-grade students during the day, Mr. Halligan’s emotionally-charged discussion with students raised their level of awareness of the issues. He implored students to be heroes, not bystanders in the bullying circle of the bully, victim and bystanders. He urged students who are victims, or who knew someone who was, to turn to counselors and teachers for help. The problem is far too big to be handled by students and their peers, he said. “There are people who care about you,” he said.

Discussing the immediate, far-reaching impact of the program on the student body are, from left: Assistant Principal Christian Losee, Lillian Pizzola, PTA Council president; Assistant Principal Kenneth O’Neill, Mr. Halligan, Principal Levi McIntyre, and Claire Mis, guidance counselor.