

Guest Commentary: Federal D. Glover: Youth don't have all the answers, but attending summit might help

By Federal D. Glover For the Contra Costa Times San Jose Mercury News

Posted:

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It's not easy being a kid these days. Take a look at these headlines:

"Sexting may have led to forced sex," "Youth reports transgender assault," "Morale, discipline declines at school," "American kids have highest obesity rates," "Bystanders shot in the street," "Teens getting drunk on hand-sanitizer," "School cracks down on senior pranks," "Youth dies from a drug overdose," "Cyberbullying led to girl's suicide." And there is the one a couple of years ago from Newtown, Connecticut: "Gunman kills 26 in school, most of them children."

The teen years can be a fun time, but for some, it can be a dark time full of gangs, bullies, drugs, violence, human trafficking, social humiliation, exclusion and depression.

Today's youth are barraged with more information and choices than any other generation. Because of the sheer volume, they skim off the top of the offerings from the media or their peers leaving them with an incomplete picture. They are being asked to make choices that can affect the rest of their lives without considering the long-term consequences -- all the while enduring bullying, abuse, harassment, and pressure from their peers, their teachers and their parents; to pass that test, wear those shoes, to lose weight, buy that shirt, hang out with that group, act a certain way or go along with the crowd.

Even the kids who seem to have it all together harbor insecurities and fears that they don't talk about. Whether real or imagined, those are all the adolescent perceptions that teenagers have. It may all be part of growing up. Most of us adults have gone through that and have survived.

But with the media so easily accessible, what may have been a rite of passage in the past is so much more laser-focused and intense these days.

It is a time to help young people meet people and programs that might make adolescence a little bit easier to deal with whether it is peer pressure, girlfriend-boyfriend problems, job hunting, managing your finances or furthering your education. That's why the theme this year is "How To Survive Being A Teenager." There will be lots of resources available, workshops to attend and a meaningful musical presented by Kaiser's theatrical troupe.

The Youth Summit might not have all the answers but I hope it will open doors or make those connections that offer help and support that will eventually lead to some of those answers. It will be held May 3 at Los Medanos College, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. There will be prizes and surprises. We will even feed the attendees a light breakfast and lunch.

The day is also a day to meet new friends, see the latest dance steps and martial arts, watch police dogs in action, sit in the cockpit of a helicopter, see some new dance moves, learn how to improve Instagram photos, find out what college offers, hear about the dangers of the gang lifestyle, or learn how to take control of your social media. And hopefully, some will be inspired by one of our speakers or workshops.

To register for the gathering of the county's young people, link to www.cccounty.us/supervisorglover; or go to Youth Summit Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cccountyouthsummit or call us at 925-427-8138.

Glover is the County Supervisor for District V. Reach him at dist5@bos.cccounty.us
