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## **Symposium teaches prevention of youth suicide**

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In 2005, 16.5 percent of high school students reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To help educators and the community help young people in Fairbanks, the school district's Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools is presenting a symposium about three serious problems in society. The symposium started Tuesday with a program about suicide prevention and a community forum. It continues today with programs about youth gang awareness and domestic violence.

Montean R. Jackson, safe and drug free schools coordinator, said the symposium was made possible with the assistance of the military, who brought the three guest speakers to address these same issues on base.

"The symposium is to begin the dialogue about these issues in the community," Jackson said.

One of the experts at the symposium is Matthew Dovel, president of International Suicide Prevention, a nonprofit organization that helps educate about suicide and provides support for post-suicide families.

"It's a community issue," Dovel said. "It has to be addressed on an individual level." According to the CDC, suicide is the third-leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds. In the same age group, suicide accounts for 12.9 percent of deaths annually.

Dovel said the top two reasons why people commit suicide is the loss of a job and the loss of a relationship. Trauma, other loss and depression are also other popular reasons for suicide. He advocates paying attention to friends and family's lives and situations as 75 percent of suicides give some sign of warning.

Thinking positively is another thing Dovel promotes. He teaches positive thinking that extends beyond thinking about good things daily, imploring young people that their current situation does not determine their future.

"The things we focus on determine your life," Dovel said.  
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