

# PRESS RELEASE



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## **More than 300 Vanier students attend *Depression Screening Day***

Most of us can tell a story or two about the person who kept things bottled up inside and ended sadly. *Depression Screening Day* held on October 7 at Vanier College aims to avoid such tragic stories by helping students before it's too late.

This year over 300 students came for information on mental health topics and more than 175 filled in a questionnaire aimed at screening students for depression. "Some students know about *Depression Screening Day* and they tell me they have been waiting for this day," indicates Gillian Bowman, a counsellor at the Vanier Counselling Centre. "These are young people who know they need to talk to someone but keep putting it off. But this day comes and it stimulates them to finally speak with a counsellor and seek out help."

This is the ninth year Vanier holds the annual event. "It's amazing," she states, "students come and then they bring back friends telling them to do the test and talk to someone. So it's very helpful. We started a little before ten in the morning and went on for more than half hour after we were scheduled to close."

Depression, anxiety, stress, difficulty sleeping or concentrating, sleeping too much and eating too little or too much, can all be signs that a person is in distress and needs help. The purpose of the day is not only to screen for depression and meet students but also to inform them about mental health and take the stigma out of mental health problems.

Students in their final year of the Special Care Counselling Program at Vanier help man the information booths and speak with students about depression, anxiety and stress. One student asked why he should be interested, he wasn't depressed. "You may not be depressed," said the SCC student, "but you may be stressed or anxious. It's not just depression it's all the stress students have to deal with. And sometimes we need help."

Throughout the day students were not only able to meet Counselling Centre staff in the Carrefour where they conducted the free, confidential depression and anxiety screenings, but could also stop by the Student Mall to pick up other handouts on many different mental health topics and meet representatives from TRACOM, a local crisis centre that offers services to adults going through a psychiatric or psychosocial crisis.

"It was a terrific success," concludes Gillian Bowman. "It's just great to be able to reach that many students, talk with them and give them support."

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