



News Release

Missouri Western State College • 4525 Downs Drive • St. Joseph, MO 64507 • 816-271-5649

Contact: Kristy Hill

Phone: (816)-271-5649

Title: Public Relations/Marketing Director

Email: hillk@mwsc.edu

WESTERN STUDENTS “SHARE OUR STORIES”

St. Joseph, Mo. —April 26, 2005—Have you ever felt like you were the only one in the world to go through tough times? Have you ever felt alone and afraid of the future? Missouri Western State College’s peer counseling group, Share Our Stories (S.O.S.), has found a way to reach out to fellow students who just need someone to listen.

The group features three different approaches to reaching out to people of all ages: improvisational theater, peer counseling and the student speakers bureau, “Voices.”

The improvisational theater division of the group focuses on performing skits and role playing on topics such as drug use, date rape, drinking and sexual awareness.

The improvisational group, with team leader Jasmine Thomas of Kansas City, Mo., recently presented five skits covering various topics at the annual Meeting of Minds Conference for college students in Kansas City, Mo. The group is also planning to perform for a local middle school.

The newest division of S.O.S. is the student speakers bureau “Voices,” for anyone who is passionate about a subject and wants the opportunity to share his or her passion with others. Topics range from drinking and driving to financial aid. “Voices” is also creating a program called “Don’t Cancel That Class” which is designed to fill in for teachers when they are absent. Instead of canceling the class teachers may call S.O.S. students to speak during that period.

-more-

Page 2 of 2 – S.O.S.

Twenty-two Western students attended a weekend training session to become certified as peer counselors. The peer counselors are not trained to give answers to problems, said Tim Crowley, counselor and coordinator of S.O.S.; they are there as a shoulder to lean on and to listen. Peer counselors provided a breakout session at the Meeting of Minds Conference called “Call Me Crazy,” that explored the stigma attached to mental health and college students.

“I joined S.O.S. because I enjoy helping people, and I have a gift for uniting people of differences,” said Karen Pruitt, Western student and team leader for the peer counselors. “I have been helped in so many ways by this campus that I felt it was time to give back.”

S.O.S. is really the revamping of a peer-counseling group that began in 1987 and called themselves The Breakfast Club. The Breakfast Club was a group of students who would get together in the mornings before class and discuss their lives. The Breakfast Club turned into a group called Peers Reaching Others before interest waned in 1997.

“The common cause of S.O.S. is the students’ dedication to making a difference,” said Crowley. “It is our responsibility to provide a safe environment, and when that is driven by students it’s that much better.”

Along with Pruitt and Thomas, student leaders include S.O.S. President Jael Haecker, Plymouth, Neb.; “Voices” team leader Terence Berger, Kansas City, Mo., and peer counseling team leader LaNisha Bosby, St. Joseph, Mo.

—end—

Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.