



## LANCASTER COUNTY ACADEMY

C/O Central Penn College

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October 11, 2022

Dear Caregivers:

The last two years have been extremely stressful for students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teenagers and young adults have had a particularly difficult time navigating the pandemic, in addition to coping with the stressors of school, work, home life, and personal relationships. Over the past several years the Lancaster County Academy has tried to gain access to an on-site therapist to help our students deal with stress, anxiety, and depression. Unfortunately, because we are not a regular public school, insurance companies were not willing to pay a therapist to serve our two campuses. This means we could only get a therapist to come to LCA if we were able to pay them out of our own budget.

Luckily, for this year we were able to hire someone part-time who has the proper credentials to lead a psycho-educational group. Her name is Priya Pathak and she has a Bachelor's in Clinical Psychology from DeSales University. She is currently completing her Master's Degree in School Counseling at Messiah College and presently works with adults in an inpatient psychiatric unit. Priya will be co-leading a group this year along with myself, Debi Schmidt, Pennsylvania Certified School Counselor for grades K-12. My background includes a Master of Education in School Counseling from Millersville University and specific training in Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

Starting Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> we will be running a co-ed, 8-session group every Tuesday ending on Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. Groups will be held from 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. for students who come to school in the morning and from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 noon for students who come to school in the afternoon. Sessions will be held in the Resource Room inside Central Penn College for students at our East Campus. Please note that we are going to try and have a different program for students at our Crossroads West Campus in the spring. We can accommodate up to ten students per group. If students are interested they can sign up with me, Debi Schmidt, anytime this week or the beginning of next week.

Please see the enclosed list of group topics. The groups will focus on goal setting, time management, organization, reframing negative thoughts, and learning coping skills to overcome negative emotions. The format of the sessions will include a lesson on a psycho-educational topic along with several fun activities, and group discussion. Students will receive some free gifts for participating, as well as get .25 of a credit for an elective and/or credit for seeing guest speakers, which counts towards an assignment for the mandatory Career Connections Course.

**Note that students interested in obtaining course credit may only miss one of the sessions.**

Attending the group *will* count towards the 15 weekly hours of mandatory school time.

Please know that we are very sensitive to the beliefs of each individual student and this group is not intended to promote anything controversial. That being said, if for any reason you do NOT want your child to participate, please fill out the enclosed form and send it to school with your student, indicating that in writing. While we would love it if students would attend all of the sessions, we are open to letting students “try it out” and they are welcome to quit at any time. Likewise, students are welcome to skip any activity that makes them feel uncomfortable.

If you are interested in having your child participate, you do not need to do anything. All students at the East Campus at Central Penn College will be given information about the group and may voluntarily choose to participate.

If you have any questions about the group, called the “Choose Joy Club”, please feel free to reach out to Debi Schmidt, School Counselor, through email at [dschmidt@lca.k12.pa.us](mailto:dschmidt@lca.k12.pa.us) or call my cell phone at 717-368-1865. We hope to see your student there! ☺

Please know that even if your child is unable to participate in the Choose Joy Club, they are welcome to see Priya or myself at any time should they need to talk with someone about personal issues. We are also happy to help your child find a licensed therapist to speak with outside of school since we are only able to provide temporary counseling of a brief nature.

Sincerely,

*Debi Schmidt*

Debi Schmidt, M.Ed.  
School-to-Work/Service Learning Coordinator  
PA Certified School Counselor for Grades K-12

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I would prefer that my child **NOT** participate in the psycho-educational “Choose Joy Club” group sessions held October 18<sup>th</sup> to December 6<sup>th</sup> at the Lancaster County Academy Central Penn Campus and hosted by the School Counselor, Debi Schmidt, along with Priya Pathak.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_