



THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL/BRENT LINTON

A suicide prevention campaign, *Your Teen Needs You!*, was launched Tuesday in Thunder Bay by, from left, parent Wendy Holmquist, Dilico Anishnabek Family Care residential services manager Tina Bennett, Children's Centre public education co-ordinator Laura Meisner, and Children's Centre executive director Tom Walters.

Kids want support

Message aims to rein in youth suicide

BY KRIS KETONEN
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Wendy Holmquist was choking back tears Tuesday morning while speaking about her son Trevor who committed suicide 6 1/2 years ago.

It was a powerful thing, listening to her talk of the troubles she had getting help for Trevor, who went through his teenage years with depression and low self-esteem.

Nobody wanted to acknowledge that suicide happened, Holmquist said, and she was met by many closed doors.

But Tuesday was her "silver lining," she said.

Because of her experiences, she began volunteering with Thunder Bay's Children's Centre, and was on-

hand Tuesday as it officially launched an awareness campaign designed to show parents how to get more involved in their children's lives with the intention of preventing the kind of tragedy that Holmquist went through.

"It's overwhelming," she said. "Suicide is very serious — you don't have to be poor or unemployed or ill to commit suicide. It can happen to anybody."

"Our children are the largest at-risk group right at the moment, so for there to be resources out there available for them and for their parents, it's great."



The *Your Teen Needs You!* campaign is just kicking off now, and will include ads in buses, bus shelters and newspapers.

There will be billboards, radio spots, posters and information cards in the near future.

The materials will appear throughout Thunder Bay District, and the campaign will wrap up in May.

The message is that while teenagers can certainly send mixed messages, they really do want their parents involved in their lives, the centre said in a news release.

And the more support parents give, the less likely that small problems will escalate into serious mental health issues, the release added.

"We're trying to create a dialogue

and bring awareness of issues of teens in the community, and really encourage parents to talk about it and caregivers to talk about it and teens to talk about it," said Tom Walters, Children's Centre executive director.

"The mental health issues of teens, the problems they're facing, the suicides, the depressions, the problems that they're having, we're really trying to make people aware of what are some of the signs and symptoms, where can they go for help, what they can do to help themselves."

"The estimates are that one-in-five youth has a serious mental health issue," he said. "We want to make it more OK to talk about it and to seek help."