

Press Contacts:

Gloria Park, 212.560.2063 or [parkg@wnet.org](mailto:parkg@wnet.org)

Donald Lee, 212.560.3005 or [leed@wnet.org](mailto:leed@wnet.org)

## **THIRTEEN'S *Cry For Help* Documentary Addresses Mental Illness in Teens, April 29 on PBS**

Film Examines Warning Signs; Offers Support To Parents, Educators, Teens

Two years after the country was rattled by the Virginia Tech shooting that left 33 dead, THIRTEEN takes a critical look at the issues surrounding teen depression and suicide in ***Cry for Help***, premiering Wednesday, April 29 at 9 p.m. on PBS (check local listings).

***Cry for Help*** is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG – one of America's most prolific and respected public media providers.

Behind the acts of violence and rage of both the Virginia Tech and Columbine shootings is a larger issue of mental illness in teens that is rarely addressed. For instance:

- The rate of teenage suicide has tripled over the last 60 years – 28 teenagers a week now die by suicide.<sup>1</sup>
- Depression and anxiety in adolescents often go unrecognized or untreated for years, and the results can be fatal – over 90 percent of adolescents who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental illness at the time of their death.<sup>2</sup>
- While school shootings are rare, signs of mental illness in the perpetrators of these crimes are not. School shooters often have a history of suicide attempts, suicidal thoughts or depression<sup>3</sup> – which makes identifying those conditions through mental health screening critically important.

***Cry for Help*** takes an intimate look at the efforts of two high schools to identify adolescents at risk. Hamilton High School in Ohio and Clarkstown North High School in New York have both been affected by teen suicide and have launched powerful new programs to prevent future tragedies.

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<sup>1</sup> Campus Mental Service, Recommendations for Change. Vastag et al, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Nejm 2006. Study from Velez et al, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Secret Service Threat Assessment Study for the U.S. Justice Dept.

Following the unrelated suicides of four students that shook the Hamilton community, school officials are taking a direct approach with “Character Day” – a raw, emotional, and honest program designed to motivate students to open up and ask for help. In Clarkstown, school officials are taking advantage of the time their students spend on the Internet by creating an online community – one where teens can anonymously air their problems and seek support from their peers and professionals.

***Cry for Help*** also examines the often difficult transition from high school to college through a first-person account of a young woman who has battled mental illness. Stacy Hollingsworth, a straight-A student and gifted musician, was by all appearances a well-adjusted and accomplished young person. When Stacy phoned home from a campus psychiatric hospital during her freshman year at college, it was then that her parents realized things were not as perfect as they seemed. She had been hiding depression, suicidal thoughts, and feelings of paralyzing hopelessness for years. Stacy and her parents chronicle the painstaking journey to put her life back together, and how she founded her college’s first on-campus chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

Additionally, ***Cry for Help*** looks at the efforts by some parents to tackle behavior and communication issues during their children’s earliest years – before depression, violence, anger or suicidal impulses take over.

Interviewees include Dr. Chris Lucas, professor of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at New York University; Dr. Frank Robertz, co-founder of Institute for Violence Prevention and Applied Criminology in Berlin, Germany; and Dr. Nolan Zane, Director of the Asian American Center on Disparities Research.

THIRTEEN’s ***Cry for Help*** is funded by the Estate of Marya Sielska; Members of THIRTEEN; the Irene Ritter Foundation; Judy Collins; the Leon Lowenstein Foundation; Donna and Phil Satow; the Marion E. Kenworthy-Sarah H. Swift Foundation; and Viewers Like You.

***Cry for Help*** is a production of THIRTEEN for WNET.ORG. Mary Murphy is Producer and Scott Davis is Senior Producer. Edie Magnus is Reporter and Executive Producer. Neal Shapiro and Stephen Segaller are Executives-in-Charge.

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