



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THROUGH MY EYES: A DOCUMENTARY AND DISCUSSION ON
MECKLENBURG YOUTH MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES**

Charlotte, NC - Mental health issues ascended a national platform after the shootings at Virginia Tech. They also took on new meaning in Mecklenburg County when a high school student, described as possibly depressed, took his own life. Those are just two headline-grabbing events that point to our community's ongoing need to keep the spotlight turned on the mental health of our youth.

The power of television and mass media was on display as events unfolded in Blacksburg, Virginia. Now the power of television will be used to challenge Mecklenburg County residents to better understand mental health issues.

"THROUGH MY EYES"

May is Mental Health Month and May 8 is National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. On that day, a group of Mecklenburg County allies in the effort to educate will present "Through My Eyes," a new documentary film produced by Emmy-award winner Linda Midgett. It is a half-hour program intended to educate teens about mental health issues.

The film, followed by a community discussion, will premiere:

- Tuesday, May 8
 - 6 p.m.
 - Afro-American Cultural Center
 - 401 North Myers Street, Charlotte
- Guests are asked to RSVP by May 1 to 704-336-2593

After the screening, a discussion will be led by Libby Cleveland of Teen Health Connection. Youth are invited to discuss problems they face on a daily basis and brainstorm ways to get past them.

"Through My Eyes" will also air on WTVI (Channel 42, Time-Warner cable channel 5) on May 10 at 8:30 p.m. and May 20 at 7:30 p.m. Each airing will be followed by a live-half-hour call in panel discussion.

"Through My Eyes" features Mecklenburg County teens and their families sharing their own emotional and mental health challenges, and how they are able to draw on their successes to overcome these challenges. The film also aims to stamp out stigma, raise awareness and improve community-wide support for youth who struggle with various challenges. Those challenges could range from anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, ADD, ADHD and others. "Through My Eyes" may also become an important educational tool for local schools, and ultimately share a message of hope for struggling teens.

A report by the Centers for Disease Control found that about 12 percent of youth in Charlotte-Mecklenburg attempted suicide last year. That's one out of every eight. The CDC report and recent news accounts demonstrate the need to explore these problems and work from a position of strength - that is, show how many teens are identifying their strengths, managing their mental health concerns, and thriving in the community.

Throughout the process of seeking and interviewing participants in this project, producer Linda Midgett was surprised at the stigma that still surrounds emotional and mental health challenges. "It's striking how hidden these problems still are and how painful it is for families to talk about, and it made me even more motivated to work on this as it is so needed right now," she says.

Midgett was most recently co-executive producer of NBC's *Starting Over*, which has received six national Daytime Emmy nominations, and is the winner of two Daytime Emmys. She was also instrumental in creating and supervising two long-format series for The Weather Channel, *Storm Stories* and *Atmospheres*.

The "Through My Eyes" premiere is presented by a consortium of partners: Mecklenburg County (including MeckCARES, Area Mental Health Authority, Health Department and Public Service and Information Department), Junior League of Charlotte, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Carolinas Healthcare System, WTVI, Teen Health Connection, Mental Health Association of Central Carolinas, Inc., ParentVoice, and Mass Mutual.

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