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Suicide prevention funding protested

By [Betsy Levinson](#)/ Staff Writer

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Believing that the suicide prevention program that was conducted at Littleton High School promotes drug use among unsuspecting teens, a national civil rights organization started by the Church of Scientology staged a one-hour protest in the center of town last week.

"Suicide and mental health screening are a real hoax," said Chris Garrison, Massachusetts director of Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a group established by the church in 1969 to highlight psychiatric violations it believes are committed against the populace.



Members from the Citizens Commission on Human Rights protest suicide prevention programs on the Littleton Common.
- Staff photo by Betsy Levinson

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Kevin Hall, New England director of CCHR, said the screening that is done in schools is subjective and can lead to placing students on drugs unnecessarily. But he takes that reasoning further, saying that the drug companies stand to benefit from increased prescription drug use and promote the screening.

Hall said the program "Signs of Suicide" is funded by a Wellesley company, Screening for Mental Health, Inc. that in turn receives funds from Eli Lilly & Co., Forest Laboratories, Inc., GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer Inc., and Wyeth Pharmaceuticals.

In Littleton, the See a New Sun Foundation sponsored the suicide-prevention program at the high school last spring. The program involved screening for depression as well as a lecture that

alerted students to the signs of depression among their friends that might lead to thoughts of suicide.

LHS Principal John Buckey defended the program.

"Safety in terms of the health and well-being of our students is the top concern among Littleton High School's faculty and staff," said Buckey. "The programs we have offered to students in the past addressing suicide and depression were focused on helping students dealing with depression feel less isolated, and enabling their peers to better detect the warning signs exhibited by those having suicidal thoughts."

He said there were two suicide awareness programs for freshmen and seniors.

"The presentation for seniors included Littleton High School alumnae who were completing an extensive nursing program at University of Massachusetts, which included a community outreach component. Their professionalism and contributions to our school community cannot be overstated.," said Buckey.

"SOS does not receive funding from pharmaceutical companies," said SANS board member Sharon. "Funding is from registration fees and grants from federal, state and foundations."

"The screening is a marketing tool for the drug companies," said Hall. "Our goal is to make parents in the town aware that when they do mental health screening, what they are doing is funding a giant child psychiatric drugging industry."

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He said eight million young people are currently taking daily prescription drugs for attention deficit disorder and other behavioral conditions.

"Anti-depressants don't cure anything," said Hall. "In fact, the drugs can cover up the symptoms and cause suicidality."

"There is absolutely no mention whatsoever of anti-depressant medication in the suicide prevention program presented in Littleton High School," said SANS director Don Lawrence. "Furthermore, the SANS Foundation has no connection, neither fiscally nor professionally, with any pharmaceutical companies." [\[continue\]](#)

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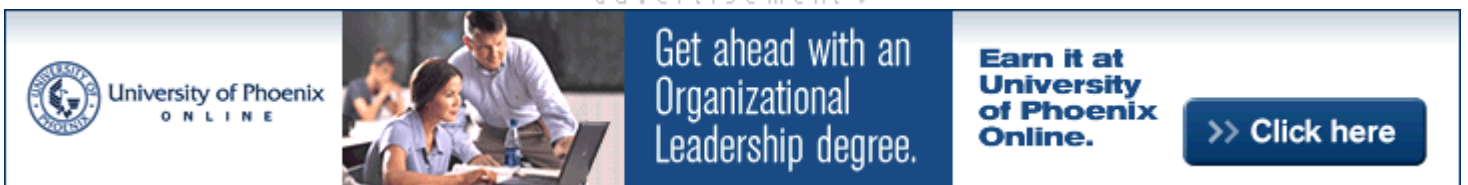
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