

# Active Minds Promote Mental Health

BY RACHEL KAMINER



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Allison K. Malmon, founder of *Active Minds*.

College can be a very stressful time. Many students are juggling work, school, and relationships, all of which can contribute to stress and an unhealthy state of mind. Bergen Community College recently hosted The Mental Health seminar, which took place on September 17th in the Maria Ciccone Theater and was sponsored by Active Minds, a student-run organization dedicated to promoting awareness for the disorders that may result from poor mental health. Allison K. Malmon, one of the speakers at the seminar, founded the organization as a junior at the University of Pennsylvania. She has received numerous awards, one of them being the “Tipper Gore Remember the Children Award” from Mental Health Magazine. She has also been featured on CNN and many other publications and talk shows.

Malmon started Active Minds after the sad suicide of her older brother, Brian. She found out that the average mental health of students was very poor in general. “What I found out when I researched was that what my brother went through was not unique—that 75 percent of people with

schizophrenia become ill between the ages of 15 and 25, the college age,” Alison says. This may mean that college students are developing mental disorders, like schizophrenia, because students are not reaching out and talking to others.

Active Minds is the only national organization that focuses on peer-to-peer interaction. They publicize student speakers at conferences who promote Mental Health. The organization is student-run and encourages student support groups on campus. Five year ago, there was only one student chapter. This transformed to over 150 chapters in North American and Canadian colleges and universities. Active

Minds is expected to grow to 300 chapters by 2010. The colleges in the area that already have their own chapters are: Montclair State University, Ramapo College and The College of New Jersey.

The seminar focused on mental disorders that may result from having poor mental health. Some of these problems that can occur are: anxiety disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, and substance abuse. All of these disorders are treatable, but there is a reduced risk of developing them by maintaining a healthy mental composition.

One resource for raising mental health is the Wellness Center at Bergen Community College, which organizes programs such as this seminar. It also provides counsel for staff, faculty and students. The Wellness Center operates on a holistic approach, and is located in rooms L-122A and L-121B. Malmon strives to promote Active Minds as a way for people to expand their comfort zones so they can feel free to seek help and says “Ideally, not only will Active Minds become the voice of young adults but it will be the driving force behind breaking down stigma and raising awareness”.