



# Continuing to Meet Student Needs Amid COVID-19

Student Leadership Services (SLS) listens to students, acknowledges concerns, and provides support.

Winter 2021, Volume 34, Number 1

Just like you, our work has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a non-profit organization that works with, and in schools across the state, we had to quickly adapt our programming to meet the needs of the students we serve. We frequently remind ourselves of what Ken Dail, SLS Alumnus and former Executive Director of Prevention Network, mentioned in their spring newsletter, "As agencies and organizations, we are uniquely suited for times such as these. We are made to confront challenges and adapt as necessary to address them. These are skills that define our field." We knew that the seriousness of this pandemic meant that this was going to be a traumatic event for students in many ways, so we decided in March to frame our approach through this lens. Over the last ten months, our goal was to ensure we kept students connected and engaged, and to focus relentlessly on three key strategies: listen to students, engage students, coach students in leadership skills and then let them lead.

**Strategy 1: Listen to students.** In March, we asked students what they needed, and they let us know that they needed help coping with the emotions they were feeling because of the school shutdowns. We knew this sudden disruption in students' lives left them vulnerable and at high risk for self-defeating behaviors and we wanted to provide developmentally appropriate supports to them and their families that would promote resiliency skills. We developed instructional videos/handouts led by our Program Director, Dawn Flood, LMSW that could be used by students, families, schools, and coalitions. We uploaded these videos to YouTube and made them available for free. Topics included stress, anxiety, disappointment, uncertainty, anger, and others.

**Strategy 2: Engage students.** In April, we collaborated with five student producers to create the 'SLS Show'. This free, weekly online, and ongoing show (Tuesdays at 4:00pm via Zoom), engages participants in interactive workshops on student-generated topics of interest that relate to what they are experiencing as we move through the life changes resulting from COVID-19. Through online activities like scavenger hunts, games, open discussions, and modeling of coping strategies, we cover topics such as procrastination, organization, building connections, preparing for life after high school, and how to help a hurting friend. As of this writing SLS has produced 26 workshops.

**Strategy 3: Coach students in leadership skills and then let them lead.** In October we launched #SLSTOGETHERWECAN Blended Learning Institute. This health and safety leadership series was developed by the 6-member SLS State Student Advisory Board (SAB) to continue to support students' current needs in a format conducive to these unprecedented times. The SAB identified six 'Hot Spot' topics for this leadership program including healthy relationships, bullying/inclusiveness, mental health, distracted driving, alcohol, and vaping/marijuana. These 'Hot Spot' topics directly correlate to current research data on risk-taking behaviors that impact teen health and safety. Each topic consists of 5 student-designed and led workshops that take participants through the process of: (1) learning about the topic; (2) how to communicate the message; and (3) how to develop a project to share with their school and/or community. Through this project, SLS promotes positive change by addressing topics most relevant to teens in the current climate and engages students to help their peers. Using both online and in-person workshops, this project is reaching a variety of students from schools across Michigan. Through these workshops, students gain a greater knowledge of the topics and are prepared to present their own projects. The workshops take place over the course of the 2020-2021 school year and culminate in student-developed projects shared in April 2021. One "model project" will be selected from each topic and entered for a chance to win a \$500 scholarship.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently acknowledged that there is a youth mental health emergency occurring and is recommending that youth participate in programs that can help mitigate feelings of anxiety and social isolation attributed to school closures. This recommendation comes many months after SLS was already implementing these types of programs. As an adaptive organization who listens to student's needs, SLS was able to respond quickly to support students during this vulnerable time. SLS understands the impact of trauma on youth. By operating from a trauma-informed approach, SLS empowers students and fosters belief in their own resiliency. These skills help youth to better process and respond to feelings of anxiety, sadness, anger, and loneliness. These supports have been part of SLS programming since 1982, but are more important now, than ever.

Hey Dawn,

*How are you? I've been really enjoying the hot spots and workshops lately. They are amazing and really informational. I was wondering if you can send me the link to the Jeopardy game we played in the Vaping/Marijuana Hot Spot? I would also like to thank you for hosting the workshop on Tuesday. During the summer, I lost contact with a close friend of mine because she started hanging around different people and started to act out. I reassured her that I would be there if she needed to talk, however, we lost touch.*

*After the session on Tuesday, I realized that a lot of the things she was doing were considered warning signs. So, after our workshop I sent her a simple text asking, "Are you ok?" and she instantly responded with everything that has been happening the last few months. I asked if she wanted to talk about it and we had a really nice conversation. She even told me about what she did and how she is trying to break some bad habits. She was really grateful I reached out because she needed someone to talk with.*

*I know this is random, but I thought you would love to hear how impactful your workshops really are. Thank you so much for taking the time to host them. I really appreciate all the effort you put into helping others.*

Student  
Freeland High School



I recently led a workshop titled, 'How to Help a Hurting Friend', and got some great feedback from students.

Dawn Flood, LMSW CPC-R  
SLS Program Director

- ⇒ There are a lot of ways we can help people.
- ⇒ I learned the different ways (verbal and non-verbal) that someone is calling for help.
- ⇒ Thank you for sharing the 988 line and the ALGEE acronym.
- ⇒ Now I know what 'not' to do!
- ⇒ I understand more about how I could help and what to look for.
- ⇒ I feel more prepared to help a friend in trouble.

To schedule this free workshop (online or in person) for students you care about, contact me at:  
[dmf@slstoday.org](mailto:dmf@slstoday.org)

Student Leadership Services, Inc. 1150 Scott Lake Road  
Waterford, Michigan 48328 Phone (248) 706-0757 Fax (248) 706-0750

[www.slstoday.org](http://www.slstoday.org)



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## Google Classroom & the Chapter Planning Tool



These new tools were launched this fall to provide more efficient support to Chapters. Resources are posted monthly and are aligned to global prevention initiatives using our nationally recognized, comprehensive, whole-child approach to prevention programming. Research shows that prevention programs with long-term investment and repeated exposure to ideas delivered in different settings over time have better results than single awareness-raising or discussion sessions. We believe when students are actively engaged and challenged to lead, they become role models for their peers and develop the self-efficacy needed to live healthy, productive lives. Our model serves to provide an inclusive, safe, environment with the guidance needed to promote student autonomy and develop confidence in their own abilities to lead change in their school and prevent alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use.

## Teen Winter Driving Safety

As a non-profit focused on the health and safety of teens, driving safety is an important topic for us. In fact, we work with AAA to loan driving simulators to schools across Michigan and support schools seeking grants for Strive for a Safer Drive.

According to research by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, winter storms, bad weather and sloppy road conditions are a factor in nearly half a million crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths every winter. We appreciate the support of our generous sponsors: AAA, Citizens Insurance, and Pioneer State Mutual Insurance who share our passion for keeping teens safe.

Please share these tips with a teen you care about and follow us on social media for more safe driving messages and resources.

- Practice winter driving with an experienced adult.
- Keep an emergency kit in your car.
- Clear your vehicle of ice and snow.
- Check the weather before you travel.
- Allow extra time.
- Make sure you have wiper fluid.
- Keep your gas tank at least 1/2 full.
- Keep extra space between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- Stay in your vehicle if you are stranded.

For additional tips on teen driving safety visit:

<https://teendriving.aaa.com/MI/>.

For additional winter driving tips and what should be in your emergency kit visit: [https://mdot.ms.gov/portal/winter\\_weather](https://mdot.ms.gov/portal/winter_weather)

## Every Day Holds a Possibility of a Miracle, Even When You Have Depression

#SLSTOGETHWECAN Speech by SAB Member, Mariam Kebe, Clarenceville High School  
Hot Topic: Mental Health

*Look out world, here comes Mariam!*



Depression is something many people have and deal with. Some have it worse than others. Depression can come from a troubled and toxic home life, school, death of a loved one, divorce and/or other life circumstances. Anyone can have depression. There is no age limit. Everything feels more challenging when you are dealing with depression. Going to work, socializing with friends, or even just getting out of bed can feel like a struggle. Depression is a mental health disorder characterized by persistently depressed moods or loss of interest in activities causing significant impairment in daily life. Depression can be described in many ways. The most common is long periods of sadness, loneliness, and other negative feelings. Loss of interest or lack of pleasure in activities once enjoyed, the feeling of guilt and hopelessness or worthlessness, thoughts of death or suicide.

Believe it or not depression is treatable. The big question I always get asked by many of my peers are, "How do I cope with my depression?" and, "How do I get out of this dark place?" The first thing I do is to evaluate the situation I am in and try to identify what is making me so depressed. Could it be issues at school, with friends, or homelife? Sometimes it takes me a while to think about it. Checking your mental status will help you in the long run. When you have evaluated yourself, you may have more than one thing that makes you depressed and that is normal! Did you hear that? It's normal! Taking deep breaths is another good thing to do because you get yourself collected and take a breather.

Next, I would recommend reaching out and talking to someone you feel comfortable with, like a trusted adult. Yes, I am sure you've heard this a million times, but once you find that right person, you'll feel a heavy weight lifted from your shoulders. Just find someone. Whether it be a counselor, one of your friends, or just anyone that you feel will listen and not judge you.

Another suggestion is to do something that you love. For me it's playing sports and eating chicken nuggets! One thing you don't want to do that I've done, is hold in your frustrations and not talk about what's going on or how you're feeling. I was that person in the song lyric "Like a clown I put on a show, the pain is real even if no one knows." This used to be me until I learned that I am not alone, I can reach out to others, take deep breaths, and do those things that I love. These things helped me realize that "a bad day does not make a bad life."

For additional resources to support your mental health, visit one of our sponsors, [Oakland Community Health Network](#). There you can learn about and access additional mental health resources including the 'mySTRENGTH' wellness app.

Federal, State and/or County funding has been provided through the Oakland Community Health Network Substance Use Disorder Services to support the project costs.



## SLS Show Workshops

Designed for both students and adults. Aligned with national prevention initiatives, parent concerns, whole child education, and Michigan School Improvement goals.  
Workshops held via Zoom at 4:00pm

### Upcoming Workshops

#### January

Teen Dating Violence, 19th  
Human Trafficking, 26th

#### February

Winter Safe Driving, 2nd  
50 Ways to Make 50 Bucks, 16th  
Leadership, 23rd

#### March

Making Good Decisions During Spring Break, 2nd  
Communicating Needs and Wants Respectfully to Adults, 16th  
Dealing with Overwhelming Responsibilities, 23rd

#### April

Helping Friends, 20th  
Alcohol Awareness Education-  
How to Say "No" and Still Keep Your Friends, 27th

#### May

Transitions, 4th  
Managing Personal Responsibilities, 11th  
Self-Control, 18th

Registration available on our website in January or via email at: [dmf@slstoday.org](mailto:dmf@slstoday.org).

SLS participates in AmazonSmile's non-profit program. If you would like to have **AmazonSmile** donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to support the work we do, visit **[smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)** and select us as **your charity**. The donation will be made at no extra cost to you.



A big thanks to **Eagle Graphics** for helping us update our logo formats!

As a non-profit organization, we greatly appreciate the generous support of local businesses and our sponsors.





On December 18, 2020 SLS virtually announced annual awards for SLS Student and Advisor of the Year as we were unable to hold our State Conference in November due to the pandemic. In a year of such uncertainty, and at a time when the SLS mission is more important than ever, we wanted to recognize two incredibly special people who are committed to bringing positive change in their school communities.

### SLS 2020 Student of the Year

This award has been given out annually since 1988 to a student who shows exceptional leadership qualities in their chapter, school, and community. The person selected for this award shows dedication to others around them, has a passion for saving lives, and consistently educates their peers regarding positive choices. This award includes a \$300 scholarship.



We are thrilled to announce the *2020 SLS Student of the Year from Walled Lake Northern High School, Haley Lipman!* Haley has been an active member of her SLS chapter since freshman year. She has attended numerous SLS trainings to enhance her leadership skills including SLS conferences, camps, workshops, and day-long trainings. Haley is a junior this year and is president of her SLS chapter. She coordinates her chapter’s SLS Zoom meetings, creates the agendas, and sends reminders.

Engagement and fun are two key ingredients in a SLS chapter, and Haley continues to make these a priority. She did all this even during a short period when the chapter did not have an advisor. Haley recently created a video presentation on the importance of SLS and the impact it has on students and schools. The SLS office delivered her presentation to school leaders across the state during a Principal’s Conference in October. Throughout the pandemic, when students could have disengaged from their groups and extra responsibilities, Haley did not. In fact, she increased her responsibilities and stands out as a role model to her peers. Congratulations, Haley.

### SLS 2020 Advisor of the Year

This award has been given out annually since 1996 to recognize the hard work and dedication of a chapter advisor. The role of a SLS advisor is different than advisors of other groups or clubs. We ask SLS advisors to focus on ten key things:



*Show students the way  
Demonstrate they care  
Give students confidence  
Learn from students  
Take risks*

*Show humility  
Trust students  
Show passion  
Teach  
Communicate the big picture*

This year’s recipient does all these things, and more. It is an honor to congratulate the *2020 SLS Advisor of the Year, from Taylor High School, Sandra Kluk*. Sandra has been an advisor for three years but became invested in SLS in 2009 when she brought a small group of students to an SLS conference. After that experience, she knew that she wanted to lead a group at her school but was not able to at that time. Sandra kept in touch with SLS and in 2017, the time was right. She called the SLS office and said, “Okay, I am ready now. I am ready to start SLS at our school. How fast can you get here?” Sandra’s students commented that the best thing about her was she creates a safe place for everyone. She makes everyone feel important and that they belong. She provides space to communicate and promote thinking. When SLS asked her students why their advisor deserved this award they said, “Because she works so extremely hard, even during her own personal time. She provides us with opportunities to be leaders and teaches us how to lead. She not only cares about our group as whole, but every one of us, individually. She never makes us feel like we are a bother.”

### 2020, What a Year!

by Jennifer Lopez  
Western International High School

What a year; all the challenges we have faced as neighbors, communities, but most importantly as individuals. We have spent more than half a year in quarantine on and off doing the same routine every day. I am really surprised we haven’t lost our minds yet. When we originally went into quarantine, I thought, “Hey, it can’t be that bad if we’re helping save lives,” but in reality I was losing my mind by the second week. I had never been forced to stay indoors. I was beginning to feel tired, uncomfortable, irritated, and especially bored. Little did I know my life was going to take a turn.

This all came about in the middle of my junior year, seventeen years old and just learning how to be a better student and preparing for college. School was my safe go to place where I was always focused. After we shut down, I began to lose focus and didn’t have motivation to do anything, which made me feel really bad because I’ve always enjoyed school. I began to feel that my mind was distracted, with no homework and my job being shut down. I was becoming depressed. I knew I was beginning to feel this way so I did what I love to do, swimming. It didn’t work for long as I began to gain weight and felt uncomfortable in my skin so I worked out to help cope. No matter what I did, I couldn’t become the happy, loving, motivated, young adult I was before --So I forced myself to grow up. My journey wasn’t very much fun, as I am still learning. I have applied to colleges, began knitting, and began experimenting with different clothing options to feel positive about myself.

As a Hispanic, there is a stereotype that parents don’t believe in depression and I have to say I agree with this. I attempted to speak with my parents, but of course they thought I was joking, so I asked my sister for help. She has been the only person to help with this since she knows I have big expectations for myself. I want to be able to give my parents at least five times what they’ve given me, and also help my immigrant community. My sister knew this, so she would take me to drive around neighborhoods where I saw myself living and improving lives. I am learning balance and positivity in my life right now and I’m becoming happy with myself knowing my full ride to college is close.

This virus is known as Covid-19 and it has brought many of us tragic events, but only we can decide how we choose to remember the wild year of 2020. I acknowledge that although this year brought me many dark times and a negative mindset, I have also learned that I am capable of many things and I am a strong woman and can accomplish anything I want. We all have struggled this year with something, and although it is coming to an end we must find a way to stay strong. For example, learning something new or finding a safe activity to do. We must all take the time to figure out what we need and want in life. Overall, this year isn’t something we should scratch off; it is the year that we learned about ourselves and our capabilities.

### The Importance of Communication

by SAB Member, Alexandria McClain,  
from Carrollton High School

*Someone better save a seat at the table for this young woman!*



Nitin Nohria once said, “Communication is the real work of leadership.” Communication is a valuable asset to have as a leader because it allows you to effectively articulate your message to people. Being able to convey your thoughts and feelings in a manner that people can easily understand and relate to can pave the way for a vast following. People will want to listen to you and be eager to help you achieve your end goal because of the way you communicated with them. The way you communicate will ultimately impact whether people will want to indulge in your ideas.

Communication is also essential for a leader because it will allow you to create stronger connections with people. Strengthening your relationships with individual people and within your community can make you more appealing. People desire a leader that they can connect to and make them feel as though their voices can be heard. By taking the time to communicate with people, as a leader, your chances of being successful in your endeavors will increase. This is due to the fact that you have created an environment, a safe space, for people to feel connected to you which will allow you to network easily and more effectively. Communication is the foundation for leadership because it shapes the way people feel about you.



# #SLSTOGETHERWECAN



## It's Magic!

Magical things are happening at SLS and we don't just mean the workshops our SAB have been facilitating this school year! We welcomed Joel Tacey, also known as Michigan's family funny man, of Joel Tacey's Tip Top Entertainment, to open up the third installment of our #SLSTOGETHERWECAN workshop series. We are so excited about this student-created and led, adult supported, blended learning institute. Check it out on our website, YouTube Channel or Facebook. If you would like to have this workshop in your school, email SLS Program Director, Dawn Flood, LMSW at [dmf@slstoday.org](mailto:dmf@slstoday.org).

### How will this workshop help you in the future?

*It will help me inform my peers about the dangers of vaping and marijuana use.*

*It will help me educate others on how to say no to peer pressure.*

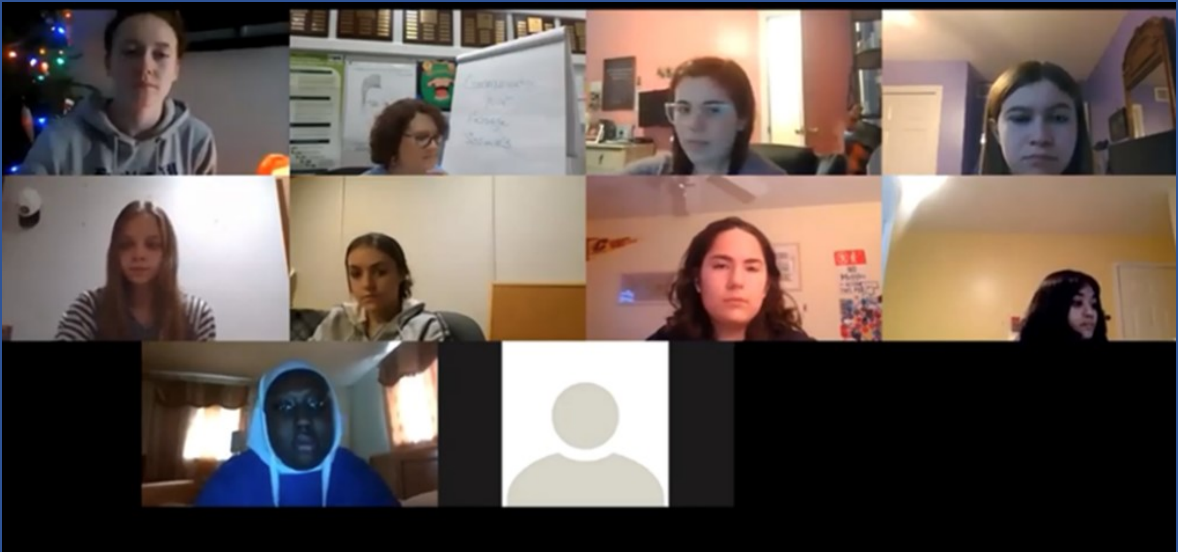
*I learned how not to distract a driver and how to avoid getting distracted by passengers.*

*I've learned ways to help a friend that may be struggling with their mental health.*

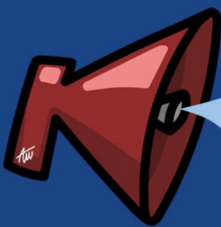
*I know some new ways to stop bullying.*

*It helped me evaluate my own behavior to improve my relationships.*

Student Leadership Services Inc.  
Innovative. Inclusive. Validated.



**For education, information, and inspiration,  
stay connected with SLS! [www.SLStoday.org](http://www.SLStoday.org)**



**Thank  
you!**

SLS Alumna, Stacey Anklam,  
for her continued commitment to SLS as the  
Web and Social Media Manager.

MSU Graphic Arts student, Adrienne Willis  
for creating new social media templates.



If we ask, then listen,  
teens tell us what they need.

less stress

help getting organized

family

a minute to  
breath

someone to talk to

a diary

a quiet place



## Thank You!

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## National Awards

**SLS is the only Michigan  
developed student-led  
program with national  
validation.**

