



St. Louis U. Men's Basketball Player Speaks With East St. Louis' Lincoln Middle School Students

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April 25 2023 1:30 PM



EAST ST. LOUIS – Beloved St. Louis University Men’s Basketball player Terrence (TJ) Hargrove Jr. spoke with the Lincoln Middle School student body during a special assembly on Monday, April 24th as part of National Every Kid Healthy™ Week. He is an alum of East St. Louis Senior High School where he led the Flyers basketball team to its first-ever state championship in 2019. TJ is currently at St. Louis University and is a key Forward for their Men’s Basketball team. He candidly shared his story, including his struggles with mental health.

This is not the first time TJ has publicly come forward in sharing his struggle with depression. TJ Hargrove was recently named a recipient of the U.S. Basketball Writers Association (USBWA) 2023 Perry Wallace Most Courageous Award because he is

using his platform as a high-performing student athlete to draw attention to help remove societal stigmas associated with mental health challenges.

TJ Hargrove spoke on the topic of mental health as part of Mindfulness Monday. TJ acknowledged that “Everybody goes through things” and shared how he has coped with depression, including strategies that have helped him walk through tougher times. To get through the dark days, Hargrove said, “Surround yourself with a great group of people.” He added, “Let people help. I promise that will make it so much better.” He acknowledged several of the people that have made a difference for him, including his dad and mom.

Hargrove also offered inspiration, encouraging all the middle school students “in whatever you do, give it 120%.” He answered several questions from students, joking that he “ain’t got time for trouble,” advocating that “school must be first” for athletes and non-athletes, and encouraging students to learn time management for future success.

Tiffany Gholson, PhD, LCSW, who serves as the Director of Parent and Student Support Services with East St. Louis School District 189, notes that “It is not uncommon for teens and young adults to feel overwhelmed dealing with school and life responsibilities. Student athletes may have added stressors like performance anxiety and societal expectations.” Gholson adds that “seeking help and support can make all the difference.” According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIH), young adults aged 18-25 years had the highest prevalence of any mental illness, at a rate of 33.7%. A study conducted by Boston University reported that since the 2000s, the suicide rate among Black youth has been increasing faster than any other racial/ethnic group, and the pandemic significantly increased Black youth’s reports of anxiety and depression.

Every Kid Healthy™ Week is an annual celebration of school health and wellness achievements held during the last full week of April. Each day highlights the actions schools and families are taking to improve the health and wellness of youth by connecting nutrition, physical activity, mental health and learning.