

### Clark County TeenTalk

*Nonjudgmental support for teens, by teens* 

### 2022 Annual Report



"I just wanted to say I owe you a big huge thank you. You've helped me overcome my fears ... in a way I never could have." - caller, May

"It helps to have someone listen to me about different things." – caller, July

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We are excited to tell you about our program! With a focus on improving young people's mental health, self-esteem and connection to resources, the efforts we make are ones all of Clark County can be proud of. Thank you for letting us share our story with you.

### What is TeenTalk?

TeenTalk offers anonymous, confidential and nonjudgmental support for teens by teens. At TeenTalk, you will talk to people your age who may have gone through similar struggles to yourself and can help you find options and give you support. We talk to teens who are going through good times and not-so-good times, or just needing to get things off their chest.

#### We are ready to talk about

* bullying	* depression
* breakups	* family
* school	* work
* LGBTQ topics	* drugs and alcohol
* emotions	* friends
* self-injury	* suicide
* mental health	* relationships

You can even call if you are feeling bored!

#### Everyone deserves to be heard.

All conversations are kept anonymous and confidential unless you are being hurt, someone else is being hurt, or you are at risk of hurting yourself. If any of these situations are happening, we take all actions needed to get those young people the help they need.

When you feel like no one understands you, call us. Simply telling someone what you're going through can often ease stress.

"It's good to talk to people when people around you aren't doing too well." - Valerie

"I personally understand overwhelming feelings leading to depression and things of that nature. It is important to talk about the way we feel it may sound childish at times but it is true." - Makayla



"Usually I don't tell people about these things ..." – caller, August



It's really great when the phone rings and we get to talk to you. In 2022, about 3 in 10 conversations we had were on the phone, with an average call lasting 21 minutes.



We also like messaging with you. In 2022, about 4 in 10 conversations we had occurred through texting and social media.



In 2022, about one-third of the conversations we had occurred through email exchanges.

#### "It's like talking to an old friend." – caller, February

### What's it like to call?

Depending on the day you call, a volunteer might answer the phone directly or you might be greeted by an adult at TeenTalk who is in charge of merging the call with the volunteer; there will be a moment of silence as the call is merged.

Because we care about everyone who contacts us, we make sure we are providing a comfortable space for you so you do not feel judged. Anyone can always reach out, whether it be to talk about a new movie you saw, feeling isolated, or other topics. Through difficult and good times, we are happy to listen and give everyone support.

If it feels like you or someone else might be in danger, we might have to refer you to the crisis line or End Harm Line under certain circumstances, but we try to let you know before it gets to this point and we will make sure to let you know when it is decided that the best choice is to refer you to someone else, so you do not have to worry about feeling obligated to call those numbers yourself.

Throughout the call, we will continue to listen to everything you say without any judgment. The call usually ends when you come to a point in the conversation where you feel more at ease than when you originally called. And we always invite you to contact TeenTalk again because you are always welcome.

> "I know it doesn't fix it, but it helps to tell someone about it sometimes so it doesn't feel like you're going through the problem alone." – Makayla



"While I unfortunately don't have all the answers, I want you to know that I hear you and your pain is valid." – Scarlett "It's so good to talk to you after a tough week." – caller, January

**"I see us as totally besties."** – text messenger, November



### Check out our website

The TeenTalk website includes many features that could be useful to people reaching out to us, such as resources, activities, and free materials like care kits, or informational materials. You can order a free care kit that consist of things like coloring materials, sweets, or brochures we made to cope with things like depression, self-injury, anxiety, and teen dating violence. We also have resources on our website which includes information on everything from coping with grief to figuring out what to do after high school, and from dealing with an abusive situation to information about a teen's rights in the foster care system. We have numbers for local resources, and local and national hotlines for issues like experiencing a crisis, coping with eating disorders, LGBTQ+ issues, and more. We also post random daily compliments and challenges for extra fun!

Check out our website:

<u>ccteentalk.clark.wa.gov</u>

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### Ask Peppy

Ask Peppy is an anonymous message board, where people can post a message on our website and TeenTalkers will write back. Some common topics that we tackle on Ask Peppy include mental health, family, and suicide. Multiple TeenTalkers respond so you will get many different points of view and a variety of experiences. Responses will have support, resources, advice, and encouragement. And you can see who responded, so if you call or message again, you can ask for someone specific, although they might not be there the time you message. So if you want some support from people your age, and don't feel comfortable calling/texting, leave an Ask Peppy!

### Send us an anonymous message: ccteentalk.clark.wa.gov/ask-peppy



"Crying and things like that is never a bad thing. It's important to go through your emotions." – Corey "So even though it may feel kind of weird now that you don't 'know' yourself, trust me - you do know yourself, and even so, it's absolutely normal to be a little unsure." – Maggie "i think having you guys as a source is good for me to keep my independence."
– Instagram messenger, February

#### Welcome to our resource and information page

#### Check out 211info to find more local resources:

- visit 211info.org to look up resources based on your age, ZIP code and need.
- dial 211 toll-free on your phone for a live, free and confidential call.
- text your ZIP code to 898211.
- download the 211info app on App Store or Google Play to look up and see local resources mapped out.

#### How to use these resources

In these pages, you can find links to helpful websites and information about various resources local to Clark County and Portland. Each link in our list of topics can take you to groups of resources organized by category, making finding what you want easy. Every resource listed is followed by contact information, if applicable, and a description of what the resource can offer.

Sometimes it can take a few tries to find the resource that can best help you. Don't be afraid to keep calling places until someone can answer your questions or help you out. Remember

## Find resources for issues you might be facing

Our resource pages have information and a brief description for hundreds of local, state and national resources and hundreds of links to websites to learn information about more than 20 different issues affecting teens. We found and collected resources for lots of college scholarships, counseling services, drug and alcohol treatment, food, housing programs, and much more. We know how scary it can be to reach out to services for support so we have some tips on our website to help you feel empowered to contact them.

Visit our website and find resources for issues you may be facing: ccteentalk.clark.wa.gov/resources

> "You can still take the time that you need for yourself until you feel like you have the strength and you're ready to fix your problems." - Rika

#### c

Topics All College Counseling Dating Death & Loss & Grief Disabilities Drugs & Alcohol Eating Disorders Food Foster Care Friends Health Care Homeless Jobs Legal Issues LGBTO+ Mental Health

Search

"definitely do some of these things I truly appreciate the thoughts and input"

- Facebook messenger, November

## Order free materials for yourself or youth you know

**Teens:** Would you like a TeenTalk journal, a Peppy pen, or a card from us reminding you how awesome you are? Let us know. We would love to send you a care package.

Adults: Do you work with teens who can use some support from us? We would love to send you some of the many things we created, such as posters, business cards, journals, resource guides, booklets about different issues affecting teens, and much more.

#### Visit our website and order free materials from us: ccteentalk.clark.wa.gov/free-

materials.html. You can also download some of our things directly from our website.

 Want free Teen Talk materials? Order here!

 We try our best to fulfill requests within 10 business days. Depending on the time of year and what we have in stock, it may take us longer and we appreciate your patience.

 If you are an individual or program outside of Clark County, Washington, please understand that, if you want to order a care kit, we are only able to send one at this time. If you happen to order more, we will only be able to send you one care kit.

 If you are an individual or program outside of Clark County, Washington, please understand that, if you want to order a care kit, we are only able to send one at this time. If you happen to order more, we will only be able to send you one care kit.

 If you are a middle or high school student wanting Teen Talk materials, please fluid hur.

 I would like something from Teen Talk for youth I know (adults)

 'Indicates required field

 Name \*

 First
 Last

 Email \*

 Other number \*

"What are you doing to help take care of yourself right now and cope with all of these big emotions you have going on?" – Scarlett "Do you know that feeling, even though you feel like you've run out of topics to talk about, but still feel calm and peaceful around them so you just stay? That's how I feel with you." – Snapchat messenger, July

#### 2022 statistics Top 5 topics\* Mental health 45% Connection/feeling alone Our average call was 512 21 minutes conversations 32% Family 28% Friends/social life 27% School 38.09% 27.93% texted us or messaged called us us on social media \*This will not add up to 100% because each person may have needed to talk about multiple topics.

Loneliness and mental health can be a doubleedged sword: feeling alone can negatively impact our mental health and struggling with our mental health can sometimes make us feel alone. That's why it's important to address both of these together. Feeling connected "can lower anxiety and depression, help us regulate our emotions, lead to higher self-esteem and empathy, and actually improve our immune systems (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2019).

Canadian Mental Health Association (2019, Oct. 17). The importance of human connection. <u>https://cmha.ca/news/the-importance-of-human-connection/</u>

"Even if you don't tell them everything, maybe just talking with someone you can trust might help." – David

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teen volunteers

Volunteers

contributed time to

**Clark County worth** 

\$37,537.56

(Independentsector.org)

33.99%

emailed us or

messaged Ask Peppy

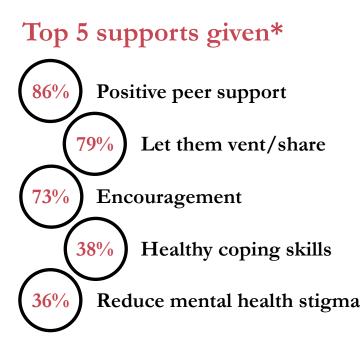
Volunteers donated

1,076.5 hours

of their time

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"Sometimes it feels like we're invisible, and it's hard to be seen. I want you to know that I hear you though, and I see all the work you're putting in." – Tessa "Honestly I just needed to vent thank you for being there." – emailer, February "Thanks for noticing. It just feels like no one ever sees how hard I try." – emailer, October



\*This will not add up to 100% because each person may have needed multiple types of support.

Clark County teens need positive peer support and a chance to vent/share. Research has shown how important it is for people of all ages to have space to process their thoughts and feelings; teens are no different. By being able to vent/share, especially often, you can rewire your brain so, over time, you "become less stressed over something that bothers you"(Ravenscraft, 2020). Although it can be easy to jump into problem solving mode, if you know a young person who is struggling, give them a chance to just vent or share. It can make a huge difference.

Ravenscraft, E. (2020, April 13). *Why Talking about Our Problems Helps So Much.* New York Times. <u>https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/smarter-living/talking-out-problems.html</u>

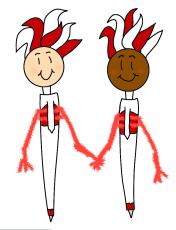
# The power of encouragement

Encouragement is a common theme in the support we provide to those who contact us; in fact, we find ourselves needing to encourage 3 in 4 teens who contact us! Sometimes it's to remind them that they're a good person despite a mistake they've made, sometimes it's to help them see something that they can't see in themselves, and sometimes it's to help them feel brave enough to try something they've wanted to try but are doubting themselves. Although we're not therapists, we see the value that Alfred Adler had in his research and therapeutic approach that focused on addressing, among other things, the feelings of discouragement and "not being good enough." We're here to let teens know that, regardless of their circumstances and regardless of any mistakes they may have made, they are good at heart, it's OK to make mistakes, and they have extraordinary gifts they bring to the world.

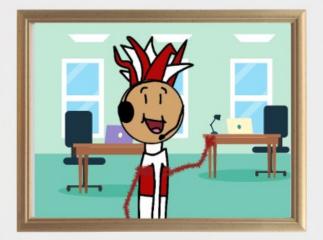
Above everything, we want them to know that they are enough, just as they are.

Psychology Today (2022, April 27). Adlerian Therapy. Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/ therapy-types/adlerian-therapy

Wong, Y. J. (2015). The Psychology of Encouragement: Theory, Research, and Applications. *The Counseling Psychologist*.



"You matter and who you are right now is good enough." – Valerie "I feel like you are feeling everything you are meant to feel in this moment." – Bri "I finally feel like I'm being listened to." – text messenger, November "No one honestly tells me how good I am other than you (excluding my parents ofc)." – Snapchat messenger, June





In August, KGW shared information about TeenTalk during a segment of "**The Good Stuff**," which highlights all the positive people and things happening around the Portland metro area.



"Sometimes others see something in us that we don't notice ourselves." – Mia

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"... sometimes how we feel about ourselves isn't all that accurate, because we can be a lot harsher on ourselves." - Rika "It's been so much more helpful to talk it out with you like this than to just eat the thoughts instead." – text messenger, May "You're really validating my feelings and im really grateful for it!!! It's made me feel much more calmer now :) Ty!!!!" – text messenger, February

On November 17, 2022, TeenTalk was featured on the front page of The Columbian in an article called **"TeenTalk's Tidings of Hope**." Nika Bartoo-Smith, a health reporter, interviewed our program coordinator and one of our original volunteers to learn how TeenTalk came to be, how TeenTalk makes a difference not only for those who reach out to us but those who volunteer for TeenTalk too, and what we do to support the youth who reach out to us. Nika paired the article she wrote about us with another one she wrote for the same issue, which shared resources that are available to children and teenagers in need our community. Thank you Nika and The Columbian for interviewing us and sharing resources for youth in Clark County! Check out the next page where you can read the full article!



"I just love listening and talking to you and telling you everything about me: the good, the bad, and the ugly." – caller, February

"I thought I'd try it And so far it seems like it's actually a good idea bc you seem really understanding and it feels kinda better that someone understands yk" – text messenger, May

#### Teen Talk's young volunteers bring tidings of hope to Clark County youth in need

### Nonprofit provides support for mental health issues, more

By Nika Bartoo-Smith, Columbian staff reporter Published: November 17, 2022

At 14, Erin Taylor become one of the original seven volunteers at Teen Talk, providing support to other youth via anonymous phone calls.

Teen Talk began in December 2003, after focus groups wrestled with how to support youth struggling with their mental health following the loss of several students from a local high school to suicide, according to program coordinator Kris Henriksen.

The answer came from a group of youth who recommended creating a support line for youths to talk to another young person about their struggles.

"Their biggest recommendation that they put forward was that they wanted to be able to talk with someone about their struggles and their challenges," Henriksen said. "And they wanted it to be someone their own age, but they also wanted it to be someone safe."

Now, Teen Talk has been offering anonymous, confidential and nonjudgmental support for teens by teens for almost 20 years.

"It just makes me emotional thinking about the fact that (youths) will go through all this training just so they can volunteer being nice to other people on the phone," Henriksen said. "The level of kindness and compassion that young people are willing to share just blows my mind."

#### One volunteer's experience

Prior to taking any phone calls, Taylor and the other volunteers completed hours of training about how to assist others and provide empathy. What helped her feel most prepared to offer support to other young people was the trust from the adult staff who believed she was capable, she said.

An adult staff member is always on site in case a situation arises that requires the youth volunteer to get assistance.

"They are not expected to be, or allowed to be, social workers," Henricksen said. "Our staff are the ones who make mandatory reports for everybody who needs it. What we want our youth volunteers to do is to be as empathetic and nonjudgmental three hours a week as they can possibly muster."

For around four years, Taylor volunteered three hours a week. She received phone calls from parents asking for support with their teenager struggling with mental health, phone calls from youths wanting advice on how to support their friends, phone calls from youth who needed someone to talk to and even the occasional prank call — which was welcomed by Taylor because they helped provide comic relief, she said.

Many of the phone calls she received were from other youths who "just needed somebody to listen to them," she said. Taylor recalled many instances talking to youths who were bullied at school and then went home where they felt unwanted or unloved, as well.

"I think what continued to motivate me was that I wanted to be able to show other people that they can get through these really dark times, too," Taylor said.

"Sometimes I find that talking to a pet makes me feel better because they're really good listeners and they give cuddles." – David

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"You are amazingly brave for standing up for yourself when you felt uncomfortable. I'm so glad that you know and can enforce the boundaries you're comfortable with." – Maggie "I am sitting in the dark, smiling crazily, my cheeks hurt." – Snapchat messenger, May "This has actually cheered me up so much, thank you." – caller, April

As a teenager, Taylor experienced suicidal thoughts and a number of traumatic life experiences that contributed to struggles with her mental health.

"I don't think at the time I knew how much I needed that," Taylor said. "I wouldn't be alive if it weren't for a series of events that began at Teen Talk with Kris."

Volunteering for Teen Talk became the space where Taylor received the support she needed — from other volunteers, from staff and from important conversations with youth who called in. It helped provide her a sense of community and purpose, Taylor said.

"No matter what was going on in my life, I was always allowed to be me there," Taylor said. "It was the place where I felt safe. It's the place where I could be silly, I could be rambunctious, I could cry, I could be happy ... That's the place where I could be the most authentic."

Today, Taylor works as a therapist after getting her master's degree in social work, continuing to use many of the skills she learned volunteering at Teen Talk.

#### Teen Talk services

Currently, Teen Talk has 10 volunteers between ages 15 and 19 who each volunteer three hours a week. The organization is looking for more volunteers, according to Henricksen. Volunteers go through over 20 hours of training before taking any calls.

The Teen Talk hotline is staffed by volunteers Monday through Thursday from 4 to 9 p.m. and Fridays from 4 to 7 p.m. Teens or adults with questions regarding a teen in their life can also access support via text message, email or social media messaging. The top five types of support given to those who reach out include providing positive peer support and encouragement, being someone to vent to, helping solve problems and identifying support systems, according to 2018 data. The data showed the top five topics people needed support with included feeling alone, family struggles, issues with friends, LGBTQ+ identity struggles and dating advice.

Teen Talk is not a crisis hotline. If needed, volunteers or staff will transfer callers to the Clark County Crisis Line, 911 or other appropriate resources.

Since COVID-19 sent people into isolation, Henriksen created compassion boxes to give out to teenagers needing a little something extra. The boxes are decorated on the outside by volunteers and filled with items such as snacks, pamphlets about coping strategies for different mental health struggles, journals, inspiring messages and a signature Peppy Pen cheerleader holding a sign with a message such as "you are worthy." The boxes can be requested by counselors or family members for teenagers across Clark County. So far, Henriksen and the team of volunteers have made around 1,600 compassion boxes.

To access Teen Talk services call 360-397-2428, text 360 -984-0936, email ccteentalk1@hotmail.com, visit ccteentalk.clark.wa.gov or find the organization on various social media platforms.



"Remember to take care of yourself, and don't beat yourself up too much about how you feel! Just make sure that you're acknowledging those feelings ..." – Rika "Its hard to deal with those thoughts for sure. Just know you're not alone, I relate to a lot of the things you're saying. You are way stronger than those thoughts and they don't define you." – Tessa "Thanks for believing in me it's been a hard journey." – emailer, March "You seem to be the type of person who thinks about what they're going to say which is good because it shows you're being thoughtful." – caller, August

### Youth got mail!

In 2021 a conversation popped up. A real metal full size mailbox was available – what do we do with it? After some discussion, one of our amazing volunteers volunteered to take the mailbox home and decorate it. Once this INCREDIBLE work was done we asked some middle school counselors if they might like to have a mailbox in their office that had cheery mail in it young people could take if they needed a pick me up. We were delighted when three schools said yes please! So three were decorated and delivered.

### In 2022, we created a piece of uplifting mail for 184 young people.

A new and marvelous way to share kindness.





me tom	Do my Best	Here's mail fool)
M Local Co	Jumpertant Valvable	Here is a F.
Mail For YOU!!	I am luckier than	" Roses 1
be gratefultor:	all the other nail in the Ibox because	1 iole
to play to dream	Fam for Luck	
1 690'0		



"Healing is a journey and it'll take time to heal. Don't be too hard on yourself." – Mia

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"The last time we talked, you told me about... How's that going?" – Leslie "thank you for noticing and caring about me ..." – emailer, September "That was the affirmation I really need to hear today." - caller, October

### Care kits and You Are Enough bags

Since it's inception, TeenTalk has always had a goal of making our outreach meaningful and as personal as possible. At the beginning of COVID-19, we couldn't do a lot of the outreach we usually do, but we noticed a lot of youth in our community were feeling lonely, so we began mailing or delivering care kits. The contents changed over time, but they always included a TeenTalk journal, Peppy pen, stress reliever squishy, information about mental health topics, and a snack. To keep everyone safe, we assemble each one while wearing gloves. We were so happy to see how much kindness could fit in a padded envelope. In 2021, the care kits were joined by the You Are Enough bags, which have similar contents. Since starting these, we have mailed or delivered thousands of them with great pride!

#### In 2022, we mailed or delivered 770 care kits and gift bags to youth in Clark County.



Each You Are Enough bag is different, but they usually contain a Peppy cheerleader, a snack, information about mental health and TeenTalk, a journal, and coloring pencils and sheets.



Each care kit varies, but the ones in this picture include a TeenTalk journal, a Peppy cheerleader kit, a stress squishy, affirmations, a self-care during COVID booklet, snacks, and more.

"Do what you need to heal yourself, you deserve to feel okay again <3." – Valerie "You deserve to have high expectations! No matter what happened in the past or what you have experienced, you deserve to be loved in a healthy way." – Tessa "Thanks for understanding, being a part of my life, and [being] accepting." – caller, July

**"When people listen to you, they feel healed."** – caller, January



### **Compassion boxes**

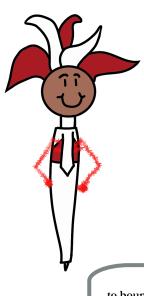
We love making compassion boxes for youth who contact the Crisis Line for support. Although each box is unique, most of them have a journal, stress squishy, snack, and our signature Peppy pen. These boxes are created by teens (us and community volunteers) and are given to the Youth Mobile Crisis Intervention Services team who give these to youth who could benefit from these boxes and brighten their day. These boxes are created with care and a lot of effort to offer variety and special personalized touches. We want people to feel that we do care about them and that TeenTalk is a resource that can provide help for everyone. Making these compassion boxes is a good way to show that and reach out to the youth in a way which makes them feel seen.

#### In 2022, we made and shared 121 boxes.

"Having your feelings invalidated never feels good. Your feelings deserve to be heard." – Cory

# What's it like to volunteer?

Volunteering at TeenTalk is like coming to a warm kind place where you can be yourself and, through the caring support you're given, use your experiences to help other people. You don't have to fear that people will use your story against you or judge you for what is going on in your life. At TeenTalk, there is always a meal or snack if you need it, there is always an open ear of a kind adult who really cares, and there is always the ultimate expectation of kindness and caring towards others, including yourself, because even people who help others deserve to be cared about as well. At TeenTalk, I like the training that helps prepare you to help others, the emphasis on having healthy boundaries and modeling healthy behaviors, and that when calls are especially tough because there are no solutions or you can't provide the help that another person needs, you are never alone.



A caring individual is always there if you need them to help you know what to say or how to get resources for the person on the line or over messaging. I think TeenTalk is an amazing program and I really don't think there are any other places that have felt more like home. -Bri

"Sometimes just having someone to bounce off stuff with or to listen can be so relieving. I'm glad you decided to talk, I wish everyone knew it doesn't have to be scary reaching out to someone online." - Bri

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"Yeah, (name of a TeenTalker) always makes me smile, even when I'm upset :)" – Snapchat messenger, July

How do I volunteer?

At TeenTalk, we welcome youth from all walks of life; there is no stereotypical TeenTalker. By seeking out diverse perspectives, we gain more insight and experience in issues facing the teens who contact us for support.

- Are you 15-19 years old?
- Do you live in Clark County?
- Are you available for a three-hour shift once a week?

Great! Fill out a brief form on our website (ccteentalk.clark.wa.gov/get-involvedteens.html) and we will reach out to you when we start our next pre-service training. The hours you volunteer during pre-service and on the TeenTalk line can count toward your senior project and community service hours.



"I never thought I'd be someone to end up talking to a ... hotline but talking to you made me but everything into focus in a way I don't think I could have done. Thank you" – text messenger, May

### Thank you

It is impossible to come up with words adequate enough to express all the gratitude TeenTalk needs to share. When the program began years ago, we only knew we wanted to give young people the opportunity to share support and kindness with their peers. While we cannot fix the countless struggles young people face, we are empowered by how much listening without judgment can help.

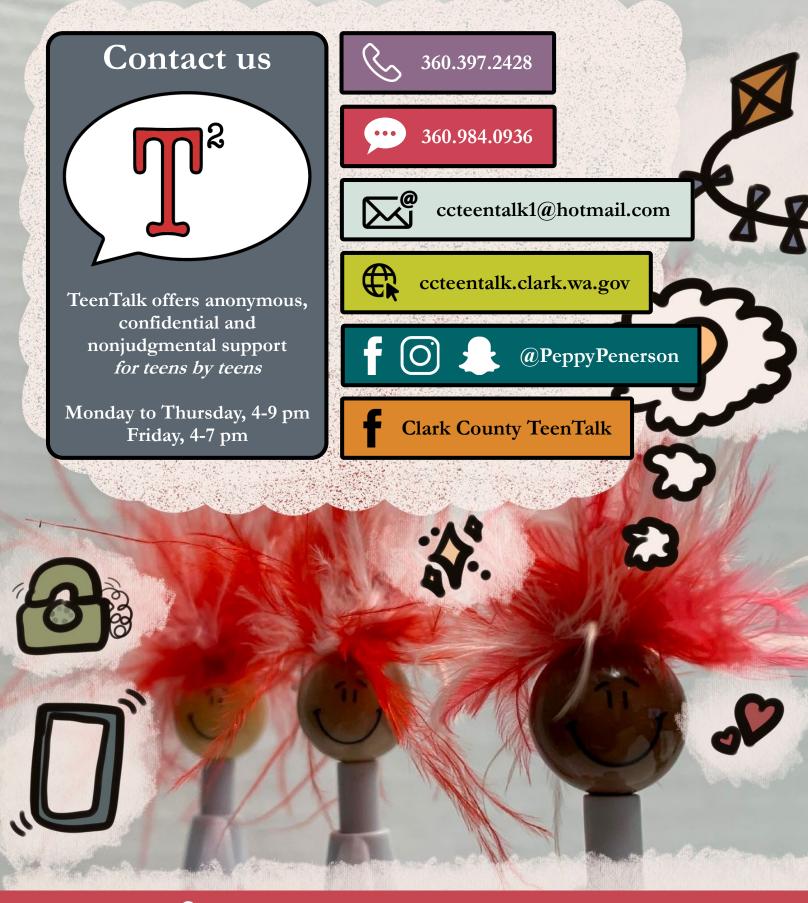
First and foremost, we must thank our past and current youth and adult volunteers. We asked for so much – all the training, all the shifts on the line, all the guest speakers, all the adult helpers – and like a flash mob of awesome, you said yes. You listened to difficult things with compassion, and you let kindness bubble out of you like fountains. We extend a huge thank you to the Clark County Council and Clark County Community Services. You believe, as we do, young people can be a tsunami of volunteering brilliance if they are given the opportunity. Thank you also to our community. Your willingness to help us do important work for young people is extraordinary.

For 19 years of letting young people shine a light of kindness– thank you.

Kris Henriksen

"Getting into the habit of making even little problems better has personally helped me a lot. It's a step towards better self love and appreciation :))" – Valerie "It can be really hard, but really valuable to talk about your emotions. ... TeenTalk is always here to help you work through some of these big emotions." – Scarlett

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For other formats, contact the Clark County ADA Office Voice 564.397.2322 / Relay 711 or 800.833.6388 Fax 360.397.6165 / Email ADA@clark.wa.gov