

Help is at hand for youngsters, parents

By Laura Wilcox | The Beacon

Classes, with an emphasis on growing up, are now available to Mukilteo area parents and their children thanks to Endeavour Elementary School's PTA.

Something new? Not really – the classes have been going on for 18 years.

"Dr. Lehman and I developed this program over many years and have received the gift of seeing tens of thousands of parents and children benefit from it," said Julie Metzger, RN, MN at Children's Hospital.

Dr. Rob Lehman, a physician in adolescent medicine at Children's Hospital, hosts the Boys Only class and the Mothers of Adolescent Sons class, while Metzger hosts the Girls Only sessions.

The classes provide information about puberty and sexuality to preteens and their parents or guardians.

"We create a fun, lively, informal conversation about puberty and sexuality geared to the 10- to 12-year-old," Metzger said.

The classes also provide resources to help guide young people on the sometimes perplexing journey through adolescence.

"We emphasize family communication – this is an introduction to some of these topics," Metzger said. "We hope families will use what they learn as a springboard to continuing the conversation."

"For Girls Only: A Heart-to-Heart Talk on Growing Up" is for girls accompanied by their mother or a trusted female adult.

Mukilteo resident Diane Conom, whose daughter Molly has attended the class for two years, says girls are often accompanied by grandparents and aunts as well as moms.

The two-part class covers issues unique to preteen girls.

According to the outline, the first class covers what girls experience during puberty, addressing problem solving and presenting practical ideas for managing changes. Subject areas include many of the common concerns of puberty including pimples, nutrition, sleep (or lack thereof), shifting moods, personal care and menstrual periods.

The second class covers feelings, actions and consequences – how to make decisions and resolve conflict; what boys experience during puberty; sexuality and sexual reproduction; how babies develop and are born; and finding trusted resources.

Diane Conom says her daughter attended the classes twice because she picked up on different things each time. Daughter Molly looks forward to learning more this year.

“For Boys Only: The Challenges of Growing Up” is for boys accompanied by a parent or a trusted adult. It is strongly encouraged that the adult be male.

The boys’ section also comes in two parts, and covers issues unique to preteen boys.

As with the girls’ class, the first segment covers what boys experience during puberty as well as addressing problem solving and practical ideas for managing changes; common concerns of puberty including pimples, nutrition, sleep, masturbation and personal care; and the myths related to growing up.

The second class covers feelings, actions and consequences – how we make decisions; what girls experience during puberty; sexuality and sexual reproduction; how babies develop and are born, and finding trusted resources.

A new class this year is “For Mothers of Adolescent Sons.” It’s for adults only, and discusses the normal challenges facing male adolescents while presenting ideas on understanding and strengthening the relationship between mothers and sons.

The girls-only classes are scheduled from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on two Fridays, March 2 and 9, in the Picnic Point Elementary School gym (5819 - 140th Street SW in Edmonds).

The boys-only classes take place at the same time and dates – 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., March 2 and 9 – in the Endeavour Elementary School gym (12300 Harbour Point Boulevard in Mukilteo).

The mothers-only class is scheduled for 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, Feb. 26 in the Fairmount Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room (11401 Beverly Park Road in Everett).

Fee for the mothers' class is \$15; the boys' and girls' classes are \$45 for each adult/child pair; and \$5 per additional same-sex child.

For information about registration or scholarships, contact Mary Beth Stibbins at (425) 349-9942 or mbstib@aol.com.

Deadline for registration is Friday, Feb. 23.