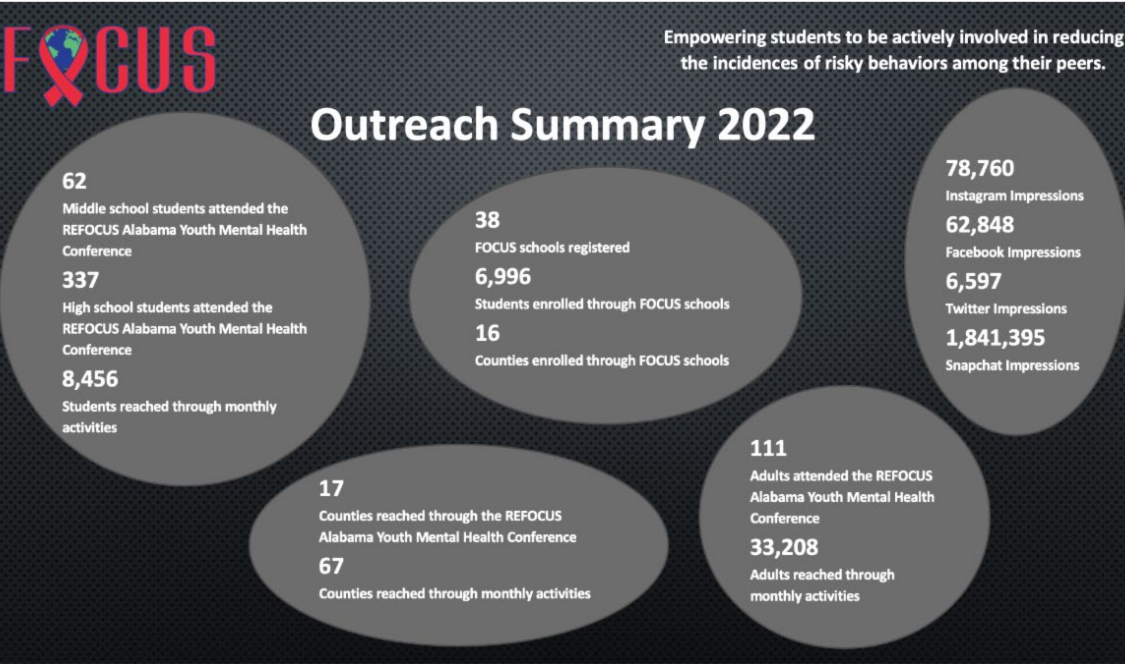




FOCUS Monthly Newsletter
January 2023





The backbone of FOCUS is mentoring and peer helping, and we are thrilled that January is National Mentoring Month! Research shows that connecting young people with caring peers and adults plays an important role in providing them with the tools needed for success and the prevention of at-risk behaviors. According to recent data shared by Mentor, a nonprofit organization, young adults with a mentor are:

- 55% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school
- 78% more likely to volunteer regularly
- 90% are interested in becoming a mentor
- 130% more likely to hold leadership positions

FOCUS would like to commend Ibby Dickson, Miss University of Alabama 2023. She serves as a mentor and encourages others to do the same. Ibby turned her passion into action by working diligently for advocacy within our state. In 2021 Ibby interned for Governor Ivey. After her summer internship, she began working to ensure that Alabama would have a state proclamation that officially declared January as National Mentoring Month. Governor Ivey signed a proclamation, and Ibby was thrilled. Ibby recently shared, "I am incredibly excited that Governor Ivey recognizes the benefits of mentoring our youth and empowering the next generation. For the past five years, I've worked to close the generational gap to connect individuals through mentorship." Ibby encourages each of us to become mentors so we can make a difference in the lives of others.

You can learn more about mentoring by visiting www.mentoring.org. In addition, if you wish to get assistance in starting a peer helping program in your school, then please contact us. The FOCUS staff is happy to help!

FOCUS Student Trainings

Kim Bailey is available for FOCUS Student Trainings. Registered FOCUS schools may now schedule face-to-face trainings on various topics including suicide prevention, stigma, tobacco prevention, dating/relationships, sexual health, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, effective communication, and emotional wellness. Other topics may be available upon request.

Schedule now to reserve the dates you prefer. To schedule, contact Mrs. Kim Bailey at KimBaileycounseling@gmail.com or call (205) 910-3692.



Are you interested in Youth Mental Health First Aid Certification?

Register today by emailing KimBaileycounseling@gmail.com

LIMITED SPACE!

Date: Wednesday, March 8, 2023
Time: 8:30am - 4:30pm

Location: Jacksonville State University
Merrill Hall, Room 105

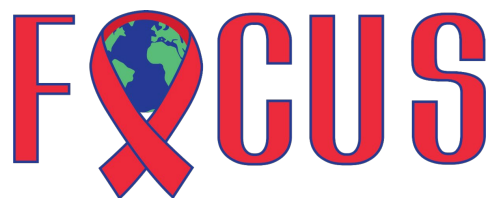
Lunch Provided

YMHFA Certification is valued at \$170.00. Thanks to a donation from the FOCUS Program, attending learners may participate and attain certification at no charge.

Trainers:
Kim Bailey, MEd, ALC
Assistant FOCUS Director, Central AL
Retired Shelby County Schools Counseling Supervisor
kimBaileycounseling@gmail.com
205-910-3692

Jennifer Bailey, EdS
Director of Student Services, Vestavia City Schools
baileyjg@vhcs.us
205-305-3812

For more information about mental health first aid, visit:
<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/youth/>.



Planning an Event Project?

Teaching students the planning process necessary in implementing prevention activities is an important step in project-based learning.

We have added a helpful form on the FOCUS facilitator portal page. Check it out! Here's the [link to the our website](#), scroll down and click on the FOCUS facilitator login page. Use your facilitator password to access this new resource. Click on the "FOCUS Event Project Plan" to view out newest resource!

Alumnus of the Month



We are thrilled to introduce our January Alumnus of the Month, Ibby Dickson. Ibby is from Sylacauga and was involved in FOCUS at Sylacauga High School. She has wonderful memories of attending school meetings and the annual FOCUS Rallies. Ibby is currently a senior at The University of Alabama, majoring in news media and political science. She will graduate in May and will pursue her masters in public administration.

Ibby is a busy and accomplished student. She is the reigning Miss University of Alabama 2023, the Vice President of Capstone Men and Women, an official ambassador, and a member of the Anderson, Mortar Board and Blue Key Societies as well as the ODK Honor Society. She is also a member of the Blackburn Institute and served as recruitment chair for her sorority, Chi Omega.

Ibby attributes much of her success to FOCUS and shared, "it empowered me to continue to serve outside of high school. As I became more involved with FOCUS, I was able to gain a better understanding of many issues faced by youth in my generation. That understanding helped launch my service project, 'Mentoring Matters,' under the Miss Alabama/Miss America Organization." Ibby created this campaign to fundraise and create mentoring programs as well as a movement to connect generations together and empower youth through mentorship. In order to recruit more mentors, she has partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of West Alabama. For the past five years, she has created two mentoring programs, assisted in mentoring program curriculum, secured over \$20,000 for youth development organizations, and has lobbied at our state capital for better opportunities for youth.

Ibby is available to assist our FOCUS schools throughout the state, and we encourage you to contact her. She can lead workshops, participate in panels, speak about how to benefit from mentorship and where to begin to further your mentoring goals. If you wish to schedule a time with her, you can visit <https://www.missuniversityofalabamaprogram.com/book-miss-ua>. To keep up with Ibby's initiatives, you can follow her on Instagram, @missuniversityofal.

We congratulate Ibby Dickson on her accomplishments and wish her the best as she competes for the Miss Alabama title this summer! She will represent the ideals of FOCUS with her platform, and we are thankful for her leadership throughout Alabama.

Nominate one of your FOCUS alumnus to be featured in our upcoming newsletters. Contact amymccreless@thefocusprogram.com to submit information.



**2023 FOCUS Rally
September 20, 2023**

2023 Difference Maker Award

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN for the 2022 "Difference Maker of the Year!" The Facilitator chosen as the "Difference Maker" will receive \$1,000 cash to be used however they choose. The "Difference Maker" will be chosen based on their school's activities, their level of involvement with FOCUS, and the creation of successful prevention activities and events.



DIFFERENCE MAKER AWARD

All nominations must be received by
5:00pm on April 22, 2023.

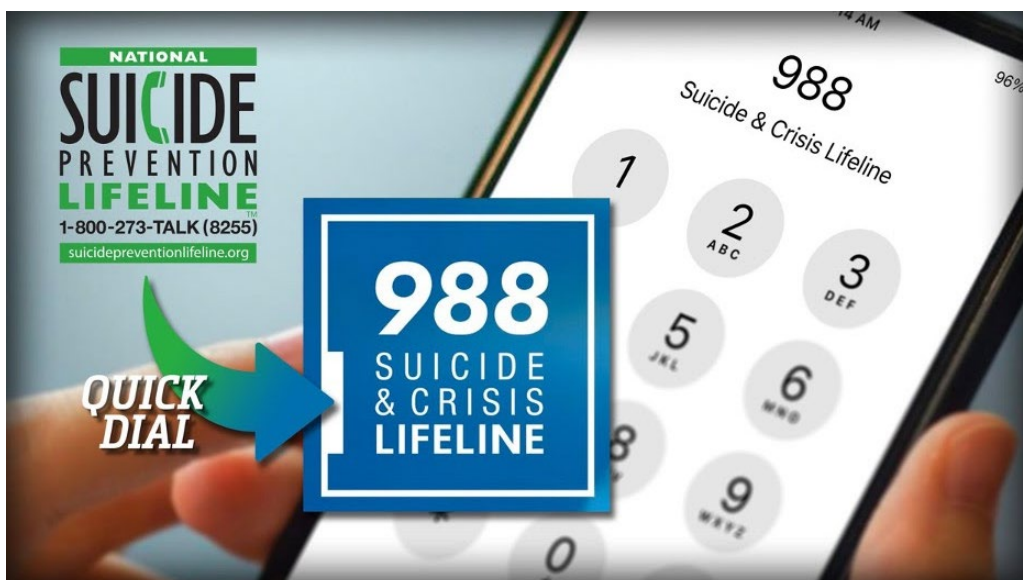
Click the button below for more information
or to nominate a Difference Maker!

[Nominate a Difference
Maker](#)

Register Your School with FOCUS!

Welcome to all our new and renewed
schools for the 2022-2023 school year! As
a reminder, we request that all registered
facilitators renew each year to update
information. Please take a moment and
click on the link below to submit your
registration.

[Register Your School](#)



New! 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline!

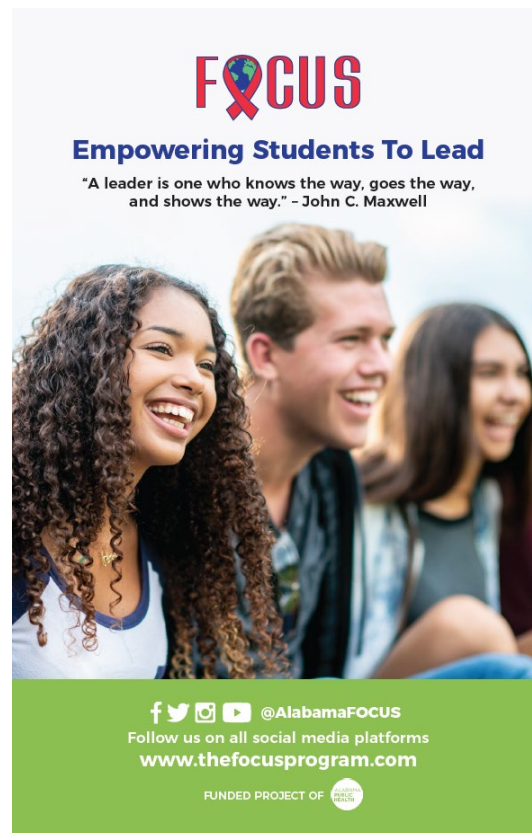
988 is now the active phone number that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This shorter number is easier to remember, and it provides free and confidential support for anyone in distress.

Be sure to share this updated information with staff and students in your school and community. Let everyone know that when they call, text or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors who will listen and help, 24/7. They will even assist you if you know of someone who is in distress. This can be reassuring when you are trying to assist a student or peer and need professional help.

**The previous Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-TALK) will always remain available for people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis.*

A new FOCUS student brochure is now available!

Free hard copies are available by request! Email sjones@thefocusprogram.com to place your order. A digital copy is available for printing on the FOCUS Facilitator Portal.



REMEMBER to tap in to the many resources available on the Facilitator Portal at www.thefocusprogram.com.

Digital FOCUS Brochure; Implementation Guide; Videos; Posters; Character Education Resource; PowerPoint for FOCUS Extracurricular Implementation; HIV Teacher Training; HIV 101; FOCUS Group Training; Certificates of Leadership and Participating; and numerous other resources!

[Visit Facilitator Portal](#)

[Register Your School](#)



Connect with FOCUS!

Stay up to date on everything that is happening with FOCUS by following us on social media! Don't hesitate, follow us today!



Monthly Health Observances

We encourage all FOCUS schools to engage in at least one health observance activity each month. Each month has some excellent choices for students on your campuses to "Make a Difference" and to encourage their peers to participate.

February

- 1-28 American Heart Month
- 1-28 Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

March

- 1-31 National Red Cross Month/Blood Drive



National Health Observances

21-27 National Drug and Alcohol
Facts Week (National Institute on
Drug Abuse

-[https://teens.drugabuse.gov/
national-drug-alcohol-facts-week](https://teens.drugabuse.gov/national-drug-alcohol-facts-week))



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

FOCUS values continued partnerships with the following state and community organizations.

Alabama Department of Public Health
Alabama Department of Education
Addiction Prevention Coalition
Children's Policy Council
Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama



Addiction
Prevention
Coalition



Council for Leaders in
Alabama Schools



BlueCross BlueShield
of Alabama