

For Immediate Release

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Ripon Area School District Presents “If I Could Have a Do-Over”

Ripon, WI – The Ripon Area School District invites parents, guardians and community members to attend “If I Could Have a Do-Over” on Wednesday, February 15 at 6:00 p.m. in the Ripon High School Auditorium. The free program will be presented by Mr. John Halligan and is part of the District’s on-going efforts to support students and their families in identifying students in crisis, share coping strategies, and bullying prevention.

Mr. Halligan lost his son, Ryan, to suicide on October 7, 2003, at the age of 13. The presentation is described by Mr. Halligan as “a father’s hard-earned lessons about cyberbullying, depression, and suicide in which I step the audience through the lessons learned from our tragedy”. He will address the latest bullying challenges that youth face through social media and will provide parents with recommendations on how adolescents can interact with their peers in person and online.

In memory of his son and just a few months after Ryan’s death, Mr. Halligan spearheaded the Vermont Bullying Prevention Law in 2004. He also led the passing of law in 2006 requiring suicide prevention education in public schools. He has been outspoken about the need for more awareness and prevention of bullying, cyberbullying and teen suicide throughout the United State, Canada, and Latin America. He and his wife Kelly have appeared on several national TV Programs including Primetime with Diane Sawyer, PBS Frontline, and Oprah.

The Ripon Area School District has partnered with members of Ripon Medical Center's Behavior Health Services team to be onsite at the presentation to provide immediate educational information and to answer questions about therapy services available in our community. Superintendent Dr. Mary Whitrock shared, "Mr. Halligan's message about Ryan's journey is so very critical for us to know about and understand as it underscores the urgency for schools to have a comprehensive bullying prevention program that includes addressing adolescent mental health and the development of coping skills when it comes to facing bullying, especially on-line. Mr. Halligan's presentation highlights how essential it is to empower students to shift from bystanders to upstanders to respond."

Please contact Superintendent, Dr. Mary Whitrock, at whitrockm@ripon.k12.wi.us or 748-4600 with any questions.

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