

Advocates promote speaking up for mental health

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MENTAL HEALTH: Mates on a Mission advocates Mike Rolls, left, and Ben Pettingill with Mount Gambier High School students Esther, Zarlee, Charlotte, Samuel and James. Picture: Aidan Curtis.

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Aidan Curtis

MENTAL health advocates are doing the rounds on the Limestone Coast to encourage people to better look after their mental health.

Ben Pettingill and Mike Rolls have toured the South East over the last week and a half to deliver talks through the Ski For Life Mates on a Mission program.

The program has gone out to community groups and schools to promote key messages around wellbeing and suicide prevention.

Mr Pettingill and Mr Rolls visited Mount Gambier High School on Monday, August 14, and shared stories from their own lives about the importance of seeking help.

Mr Rolls said they prided themselves on sharing both the successes and the “tough stuff” to really get the message across.

“When you do that, you’re building a connection with your audience,” he said.

“We make sure we can relate to things they might be dealing with themselves, and in turn, when you share, it prompts them to feel comfortable and safe in that environment to share themselves.”

Those stories led to the key points that the pair wanted to touch on with each talk, which Mr Pettingill said included not spending too much time on things you can not control.

"Focusing on what you can control and building momentum to get out of that rut or get through that tough time," he said.

"Message number two is building your team, so surrounding yourself with people that can support you and you can support them."

Mr Pettingill said they also spoke on the importance of letting yourself be vulnerable and taking things one step at a time.

Those messages were especially important for young people, and Mr Rolls highlighted high school as a very difficult time for a lot of people.

"I know Ben and I are a fair way out of school now, but going through school is one of the hardest times in your life," he said.

"There's a lot of changes going on and your thought processes and patterns are sometimes skipping around a little bit.

"If we can come in here and set them up with some really solid concepts and ideas around how to navigate those tougher times in their life, hopefully that will bode well for them for the future."

Following the talk, Mount Gambier High School students Charlotte, Esther and Samuel said they had some key takeaways for their own lives.

Charlotte said it was important to make sure people knew it was ok to talk to someone if you are struggling, while Esther highlighted the importance of making sure you keep going, no matter how hard things are.

Samuel added that it is important to let your emotions out because it is better than isolating yourself and trying to tackle things alone.
