April 15, 2019

Dear 7th & 8th Grade Parents/Guardians:

As you know, Bayside Middle School is committed to taking serious, proactive steps to curb the bullying problem that is found in schools everywhere. Our efforts this year have focused on raising awareness about bullying and cyberbullying with students and parents. We have recruited Mr. John Halligan, an international speaker and author, to conduct a presentation for students during the day and for parents in the evening on Monday, May 6th, 2019. We are fortunate to have Mr. Halligan’s presentation funded in part by the Hours Against Hate Grant.

He will relay his own tragic experience as a Dad whose 13-year-old son took his own life in 2003, after bullying by peers since the 5th grade, both in school and online. Mr. Halligan further shares that Ryan wrestled with underlying mental health issues and depression and that these factors contributed to Ryan’s vulnerability and ultimate suicide. His story is riveting and compelling and reminds students that there is a face, a person, a heart, on the other end of the screen. His presentation will begin with a short video collection of home movie clips and still pictures of Ryan. John will then tell the story of Ryan’s life and the factors that led up to his son’s suicide. The students will gain a perspective from inside the family of a child who is a victim of bullying and cyberbullying. In the wrap-up session, they will receive life-changing lessons about forgiveness, suicide prevention, the role of bystanders and a challenge to apologize to someone.

We encourage you to visit a website named for his son: www.RyansStory.org for more information. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, we wanted to inform you about it in advance. We encourage you to ask your child about the presentation and discuss it together. If for any reason, you would prefer that your child not attend this presentation, please send a written note to Mrs. James before Friday, May 3rd, 2019. Should you have further questions, please feel free to contact Mrs. James by email at cjames@foxbay.org.

Respectfully,

Jodi Hackl, Principal               Charity James, School Counselor