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'Secret Life of a Massachusetts Teen' is focus of CARES Forum

Adults only forum
set for March 30

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LUDLOW – This year's Ludlow CARES Coalition Spring Forum is about secrets, specifically, "The Secret Life of a Massachusetts Teen," but, according to Jon Mattleman, MS, this year's guest speaker, teens aren't really so secretive – they want to talk about their lives. The question is – do parents really listen?

"Kids actually want to talk to us," said Mattleman, who will discuss "The Secret Life of a Massachusetts Teen" at the Ludlow CARES Coalition



Jon Mattleman, MS

"Kids actually want to share their fears and joys and more," Mattleman said, "but the problem is us, our feedback, our judgment."

To illustrate his point, Mattleman offered an example that most parents can relate to – when their teen gets a disap-

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fourth annual Spring Forum set for Monday, March 30, beginning at 7 p.m., in the Ludlow High School auditorium.

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pointing grade on a school test. Parents too often jump into problem-solving mode, he said.

"Did you study enough? Did you talk to your teacher? Can you take a makeup test?" This doesn't really encourage a lot of dialogue," said Mattleman.

Often parents are too focused on their own part of the discussion.

"When we're fighting with them, we're thinking more about what we are going to say and not doing a good job of listening," Mattleman continued. "It's more important what they say than what we say."

A mental health professional for 30

tional impact of technology on youth, and adolescent at-risk behaviors."

In "The Secret Life of a Massachusetts Teen," Mattleman said he will provide parents with a fun and engaging discussion that will provide strategies parents can immediately implement to improve their relationships with teens and better understand them.

"My philosophy is – who has time to wait?" said Mattleman. "The presentation is a lot of fun because if you aren't having fun, you aren't learning."

Mattleman weaves in stories of his own experiences as a parent of two children, now both adults.

"Are these stories true? I couldn't make up these stories," he said. "I will

of how their kids should be and what they should be doing. When they aren't (meeting expectations), we get really frustrated," he said. "We should ask ourselves is it that they won't do something or that they can't do something... sometimes it's a brain development issue. Parents have to realize it's important to have reasonable expectations and to recognize that kids are on their own timetable."

While teen behavior may be puzzling and exasperating to parents, Mattleman said, "Kids do things for their own reasons – and they're good reasons – they make sense to kids at the time."

Mattleman said he will give parents the language they can use to improve communication with their teens.

really want to be able to respond in ways that make sense.

"If we listen more, kids will talk more," he continued.

Following Mattleman's presentation, school guidance counselors will be on hand for parents who have follow-up questions.

As part of forum, the Ludlow CARES Coalition will present its "Citizen of the Year" award for 2014 to CARES Coalition member Jen Fafard, honoring her for her work on the Coalition, which includes introducing and organizing Red Ribbon Week activities in Ludlow and her work in bringing Prescription Drug Take Back Days to town via the Ludlow Police Department.