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## Health theme of youth summit

*Kate McGinty  
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More than 400 Riverside County teens headed to Cathedral City on Thursday for the tenth annual Youth Summit.

The all-day workshop, which this year focused on "Going Healthy," split teens into sessions to help them spot the signs of depression, prescription drug abuse and suicide, and also gave tips on Internet safety.

Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit, whose office hosted the event at the Doral Desert Princess Resort, called the summit a way to unite young people into community planning and problem-solving.

"The Youth Summit provides valuable training so that participants can go back to their schools and influence the lives of their peers," he said in a statement.



A pair of seventh grade students from Jurupa Middle School talk between sessions Thursday morning during the Riverside County Partnership for Safe Communities tenth annual Youth Summit held at Doral Desert Princess Resort and Spa in Cathedral City. (Crystal Chatham The Desert Sun)

"It's exciting to see our future leaders get involved, and I'm glad my district was selected to host this signature youth leadership event."

The high-energy summit, which included a live band during lunch, welcomed student leaders from 16 schools, including some from Desert Hot Springs and Indio.

The atmosphere fostered a "safe zone" that relieved teens of peer pressure and allowed them to be more candid with each other, said Monica Bullock, 18, a senior at Palo Verde High School in Blythe.

Bullock, who attended the summit for her third consecutive year, said teens often end up acting as peer counselors to each other at the summit.

"It's surprising, because sometimes you wouldn't expect them to learn something from it," she said. "It gives off a good message for the kids."

Jatziri Espino, 14, a freshman at Shadow Hills High School in Indio, called it a "cool day" that will change the way she interacts with her friends.

The workshops reinforced the power of a positive attitude, she said.

"I didn't know that suicidal people can actually cause suicidal thoughts in your friends," Espino said. "It was pretty interesting."

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