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3-27-2012

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March 27, 2012

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.— In an effort to raise awareness about the dangers and prevalence of eating disorders, the Gardner-Webb counseling services department is screening the documentary "Someday Melissa" on Monday, April 2 at 7 p.m. in Blanton Auditorium, located inside Hamrick Hall.

"Someday Melissa" is the story of Melissa Rose Avrin, the 19-year-old who died of a heart attack in 2009 after a five-year battle with bulimia. Melissa is remembered as extremely bright and creative, and her poem "Someday..." became the inspiration for this documentary, which her mother Judy Avrin created.

"Many people struggle with eating disorders, but because they're ashamed, they are afraid to admit they're struggling," said Courtney Gantt, a counselor at Gardner-Webb. "We want our students to know that it's ok to come forward, that they do not have to feel ashamed, and that we are here to help."

Gantt said the purpose of the documentary screening is to help both those who feel they're struggling and those who know friends who might be struggling. "It puts a lot of pressure on you when you think your friend is going through such a silent struggle, and you often don't know how to deal with it effectively. We're going to share information and resources that will help."

One of those resources is a new online screening, recently launched on the Gardner-Webb website. "The online screening is great because it's completely anonymous. People can go online and answer questions about their eating habits, and the screening will help them determine whether they might have a problem. But we in the counseling center have no idea who has filled out the survey. It's completely private, and up to them whether they come forward with the information they receive," Gantt said.

The most important thing people can do if they are struggling with an eating disorder, or if they know someone who may be, is to come forward and share it with a counselor, Gantt said. "We are here to help, and we care. We desperately want our students to know that."

The online screening is available at mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/GWUHELP. To speak with someone in the Gardner-Webb counseling center, call 704-406-4563.

Closed captioning will be available.

More information about the "Someday Melissa" film is available at somedaymelissa.com.