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**National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month**

**How To Make a Difference:**  
We can all use this month to raise awareness about the obesity epidemic and show people how they can take steps toward a solution.

**Here are just a few ideas:**

- 1) Encourage families to make small changes, like keeping fresh fruit within reach or going on a family walk after dinner.
- 2) Motivate teachers and administrators to make schools healthier. Help them provide healthy food options and daily physical activities for students.
- 3) Ask doctors and nurses to be leaders in their communities by supporting programs to prevent childhood obesity.

## Rachel's Challenge Program

Rachel's Challenge exists to equip and inspire individuals to preplace acts of violence, bullying and negativity with acts of respect, kindness and compassion. Rachel's inspiring story provides a simple, yet powerful example of how small acts of kindness and acceptance motivate us to consider our relationships with the people we come in contact with every day.

around us. Rachel's story gives students permission to start their own chain reaction of kindness and compassion, which positively affects the climate in our schools and communities. The Assembly hosted 7-12<sup>th</sup> graders from Texarkana, Prescott & Nevada Schools and 4-12<sup>th</sup> graders for Hope, Blevins, Spring Hill and Garrett Schools which was a total of 5,000 students.

community members to experience first-hand the impact Rachel's story had on their students. It also, prompts the listener to reflect on their relationship with and impact on their children and the people around them. The Community Event renews the participants hope that their life has purpose through service to others, gives participants permission to start their own chain reaction of kindness and helps them understand how they can support their children and the school in their efforts to promote respect & kindness.

Rachel's Challenge is a very motivational program that demonstrates to the audience the power of deliberately reaching out in a word and action to others to start what Rachel called "a chain reaction of kindness and compassion". The community rallied behind the program by providing \$16,000 in donations and grant funding to pay for the program.



To follow up on the impact of the Assemblies, teen leaders from each school were chosen to participate in a FOR (Friends of Rachel) Club Training. There were 252 teens trained on youth leadership and empowerment to ensure the chain reaction of kindness promoted through Rachel's Challenge will continue in each of their schools. The main goal of FOR Clubs is to help create a permanent cultural change in the school.

The Rachel's Challenge program was provided to students, parents and community members in Miller, Hempstead and Nevada counties. On August 26-28<sup>th</sup>, student assemblies, FOR Club trainings for teen leaders and Community Events were held directly impacting 6,000 local residents.

The Rachel's Challenge Assembly is based on the life and writings of Rachel Joy Scott who was the first victim of the Columbine school shootings in 1999. Conveyed through stories from Rachel's life and writings, the Challenge assembly shows the profound positive impact we can have on those

There were 2 Community Events held, Hope and Texarkana, which depicted the profound positive impact people have on those around them. It demonstrates to the audience the power of deliberately reaching out to others. The Community Event allowed 400 parents and

- Funding for Rachel's Challenge provided by:**
- Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas
  - Wadley Regional Medical Center of Texarkana
  - Wadley Regional Medical Center at Hope
  - Firestone Community Fund
  - Brentwood Industries
  - Texarkana AR School District
  - Spring Hill School District
  - Blevins School District
  - Hope School District
  - Prescott School District
  - Nevada School District
  - Southwest Arkansas Prevention Taskforce

## truth Campaign Watch Party

The vast majority of young people DON'T smoke. In fact, the rate of tobacco use among teens has reached a historic low of just 8%. That's why Legacy's **truth**® campaign is empowering this generation to FINISH IT once and for all and create the first generation for whom tobacco use is a thing of the past. The local SPU (Special Prevention Unit) youth group from the Texarkana area received a \$400 grant to host an MTV Video Music Awards Watch Party on August 30<sup>th</sup> to view the launch of the **truth** campaign's newest ad, which aired during the Award show.

With the launch of



the new FINISH IT campaign, **truth** and these young people are taking outreach to the next level. Rather than just focusing on the 8% of teens who smoke, they are expanding their messaging to rally a volunteer army of the 92% who don't. With just 6 days to plan this event, the SPU group had over 30 youth in attendance. Food was provided, along with shaved ice and a pop-corn bar, as the youth signed tobacco pledges letting the Big Tobacco companies know they were proud to take a stand and to FINISH IT!

Since launching in 2000, **truth** has had a direct impact on the nation's health. Research has documented that **truth's** messages resonate strongly with its target, including important racial/ethnic minority groups, and numerous studies have shown that exposure to the campaign is associated

with changes in tobacco-related attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. In its first four years alone, **truth** is estimated to have prevented 450,000 youth from using tobacco. Findings suggest that **truth** messages may promote attitudinal and behavioral change in young adults as well.

Furthermore, a cost-effectiveness study found that the campaign not only paid for itself in its first two years but also saved between \$1.9 and \$5.4 billion in medical care costs to society. The campaign has also been praised by leading federal and state public health officials, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and former President George H.W. Bush. And most recently, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention included **truth** in its portfolio of effective programs.

## 4th Annual PRIDE Academy - Another Success

The 2015 P.R.I.D.E. Academy occurred on August 10-13<sup>TH</sup> at the College Hill Middle School in the Texarkana Arkansas School District, with 89 fifth grade graduates. Additionally, there were 27 Y2L (Youth 2 Leadership) teen leaders and 24 TAPD Officers directly involved in this event. There were a total of 140 PRIDE Academy participants. The goal of the academy is to promote positive behaviors and decision making skills as the PRIDE acronym indicates: Personal Responsibility in Daily Efforts. Academy participants learned about goal setting, anger management/ conflict resolution, personal achievement, financial responsibility, healthy lifestyles, family dynamics, and self-esteem. All sessions used an interactive style, encouraging participants to practice decision-making, coping, and refusal skills. This allows participants to make positive life choices within their daily life. Service learning and team building are two other components included in the framework of the academy to help foster healthy relationships. Specifically, one of the

scheduled activities will be creating a banner on the very first day of the academy with each team choosing a team name and motto. This banner will be carried by the team to each activity throughout the week. Once the academy is over, all of the banners hang on the walls of the Middle School to serve as a reminder of the relationships and events that took place during the academy.

The service learning aspect was phenomenal this year. This week put a big emphasis on PRIDE by demonstrating, "Pride in Self, Family, School, and Community". In an effort to put PRIDE into practice, a service project was included as a session for all students throughout the week. Each team traveled off site to locations where they performed services benefiting the Texarkana Arkansas city parks and Harvest Texarkana. Recruits were given specific jobs which included general clean-

up of the areas and painted 26 trash barrels to be placed around the city during events. Recruits were made aware and understood the problem many families face every day with hunger in the Texarkana area and packed boxes of food to be distributed to needy families all across southwest Arkansas.

On the final day of the academy participant accomplishments are commended with an event that parents attend. It kicks off with activities including a Dance Off contest and team competitions through the Obstacle Course for prizes. The Chief of Police leads a formal graduation ceremony, where each student was provided a diploma and backpack full of all required school supplies.

The impact of the PRIDE Academy since inception August 2012 is over 800 students, peer leaders, and community volunteers. Each PRIDE Academy graduate continues to be monitored throughout their school duration.





## SOUTHWEST REGION HOMETOWN HEALTH

Sarah Powell, Editor - RHS

Joni McGaha - HHI Regional Manager

Deanna O'Malley- RHS

Arnell Washington - RHS

Bonnie Carr - HHI Coordinator

*Keeping Your Hometown Healthy!*

[www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov)

September marks National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. Obesity now affects 17 percent of all children and adolescents ages 2-19 years in the United States. Childhood obesity puts America's children at risk for high cholesterol, high blood sugar, asthma, and mental health problems.

But it's not too late to turn this epidemic around. Communities can work to promote healthy lifestyles for children by:

- \* Ensuring children and adolescents get the recommended amounts of physical activity each day.
- \* Improving children's access to healthy foods and beverages—at home, at school, and at local events and venues.
- \* Creating and maintaining safe neighborhoods for physical activity and improving access to parks and playgrounds.
- \* Providing plenty of fruits and vegetables, limiting foods high in solid fats and added sugars, and preparing healthier foods at family meals.

[www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/](http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/)  
[www.healthierkidsbrighterfutures.org/](http://www.healthierkidsbrighterfutures.org/)



## Around the Region

The **Montgomery County** Fair featured a booth at the County Fair on August 11<sup>th</sup> to help educate fairgoers on the dangers of texting and driving. Bonnie Carr, SWR Hometown Health Coordinator, displayed information on distracted driving, types of distractions, who is at risk, how can parents help, state laws for teen driving and no use of cell phones in school zones. Information sheets on distracted driving and ACT 811 were handed out to those that visited the booth. The booth won "Best of Show" for educational booths.



**Union County** hosted the 8th annual PRIDE Youth Programs Office of Coordinated School Health Fair on August 11<sup>th</sup> at the El Dorado High School. Over 400 school district staff members and 56 volunteers attended the event

with 355 signing in to take advantage of services provided. Twenty-three vendors partnered to provide screenings and/or educational information. In addition, 21 local businesses donated items for door prizes, including a bank who provided gifts for teachers and lunch for all. Screenings included 127 for weight and waist to hip ratio, 82 blood pressure, 62 lipid tests, 36 BMI, and 36 chiropractic tests. PRIDE members also garnered 83 tobacco-free pledges.

**Polk County** Quality of Life Inc. has partnered with local business's to make the Dolly Parton Imagination Library available to the preschool children in Polk County. The program was launched in 1995 by Dolly Parton in her home county in East Tennessee. Her vision was to foster a love of reading among her county's preschool children and their families by providing them with the gift of a specially selected book each month. By mailing high quality, age appropriate books directly to their homes, she wanted children to be excited about books and to feel the magic that books can create. Moreover, she could insure that every child would

have books, regardless of their family's income. Since the initial launch in 1995 this program has gone from just a few dozen books to over 60,000,000 books mailed to children in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The program is currently providing books to over 750,000 children every month.

**Hope Farmers' Market** is a 100% grower-produced market that is open each Tuesday. This season the market celebrated National Farmers' Market Week on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Vendors had themed booths, the Silvey Family provided music, Jennifer Quinn made balloon animals and the Hempstead County Master Gardeners demonstrated how to make Wooly-



Worms as a activity for the children. The 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist Church hosted the Hospitality Table and Ruth Cook, Cooperative Extension, provided a cooking demonstration.