

# Students, parents muscle a stronger GRIP on family

BY MICHELLE GLANCE  
STAFF WRITER

More people are finding out how to get a GRIP on substance-abuse and other problems, if the attendance at Saturday's program is any indication.

About 600 parents and middle school students participated in the second-annual GRIP (Generations Responding to Issues and Problems) program at North Farmington High School — up from 550 last year.

"We've concentrated on fighting drug use," said Carol Luckscheiter, a member of the GRIP planning committee. "Now we're expanding that message and saying we want to have strong families, strong communities and strong schools."

Linda Enberg, co-president of the GRIP planning committee and a trustee on the Farmington Board of Education, was pleased by the turnout.

"It's a big increase from last year and we're really pleased," Enberg said. "We want to get everyone in the community on the same page so that we all have the same goal of what we're trying to do. We think this is a real fun way to do it and families get to learn a little bit too."

Last year's GRIP meeting focused on steering kids away from drug and alcohol use. This year's program continued that theme, while also stressing the need for building strong families.

### Activities coming

Bob Maxfield, superintendent of the Farmington School District, reminded GRIP attendees about a new after-school program that's starting for middle schoolers.

The program, beginning March 11 at the William M. Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile Road east of Middlebelt, will provide after-school activities led by trained staff.

Activities like swimming, basketball, volleyball, soccer, pool, card and board games will be available Monday-Thursday from 2:30-5:30 p.m. for youngsters ages 11-15 who reside in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

C. Kevin Wanzer, this year's keynote speaker for the GRIP program, is a nationally renowned speaker and "edu-tainer" who combines humor and meaning.

"A person has to realize that it's never too late for a young person to change their mind," Wanzer told the gym packed with middle school students and parents. "It's never too late for a

young person to stop using drugs and alcohol."

"Being drug free is not a geeky thing," he added. "I'm 28 and I don't drink and I don't smoke."

Wanzer complimented the GRIP organizers for stressing the message.

"I've never even been to a school district that's done anything like this," he said. "This is amazing."

The GRIP meeting began at 9 a.m. with comments from Maxfield followed by comments from Wanzer.

### Many sessions held

Parents and students could then attend individual sessions before re-convening in the auditorium for the final speech. Some sessions:

■ "Middle School Madness" was presented by Norm Luebke, assistant principal at Power Middle School who has worked with middle school students for seven years. With a sense of humor, Luebke fielded parent questions and offered insight into some of the emotional changes middle school students experience.

■ "TWYKAA Teaser" was presented by Enberg, co-president of Farmington Families in Action. TWYKAA stands for Talking With Your Kids About Alcohol. A University of Michigan study shows an increase in alcohol abuse by young people. This program was geared toward telling parents how they could respond.

■ "Positive Parenting in a Negative World" was presented by Kathy Tosolan, an elementary school teacher and a former Dale Carnegie instructor. The program was geared toward helping children build self-esteem and self-confidence. Tosolan showed parents how they could help their children stay focused on positive goals, help them highlight their strengths and show them how they can make a difference.

■ Grades 4 and 5: "I Dare You: Ways to Cope with Friendly Pressure" which was facilitated by Farmington Public Schools S.A.D.D. chapters. High school students, through skits and role playing, taught participants how to be assertive when faced with social pressures.

■ Grades 6 and 7: "Rescue 9-1-1" facilitated by Community Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and Farmington Public Schools student roundtable members. Students learned the right time to call 9-1-1 and basic first aid techniques.

■ Grade 8: "There's a Better Way" was facilitated by Farming-



A 'name' shirt: Kevin Wanzer autographs GRIP T-shirts following Saturday's program.

■ 'We've concentrated on fighting drug use. Now we're expanding that message'

Carol Luckscheiter



Laughing together: St. Fabian sixth-grader Katie Ryan laughs with her dad, Steve Ryan, during a GRIP shirt.

Stuffing it: Derek Laskowski, Warner Middle School eighth-grader, stuffs 11 marshmallows in his mouth at the urging of GRIP presenter Kevin Wanzer.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARIN LAMBY

Any big mouths?: Kevin Wanzer asks, "Who has a big mouth?" Wooddale's Meg Calahan volunteers to show him by stuffing marshmallows in her mouth.



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