

Kids help kids get a GRIP

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

For middle school students such as Whitney Sage and Lindsay Marker, the message from Thursday night's GRIP workshops carried more weight coming from high school students.

Both sat in one of the classroom workshops, listening and watching high school students act out adolescent situations. The older students were trained during weeks leading up to GRIP - Generations Responding to Issues and Problems - on modeling for middle school students strategies to avoid peer pressure pitfalls. Through the skits, they conveyed how to refuse the bad and take a stand for the good.

One skit had two students trying - without success - to convince two others to cheat on a test. A teacher had left a copy of an exam on his desk.

"If I cheat now, and I don't get caught now, it's 100 percent," said one of the role-playing students. "These are free points and I don't have to work for them." Maybe so, chimed in one of the skit's other students. "But if you don't learn the material now, you'll probably fail the final exam."

Thinking over the long-term ramifications, the would-be cheater decided it wasn't worth it.

According to Whitney, a sixth grader at Power Middle School, it was easier listening to the high schoolers. "Normally, it's hard to talk to your parents. But when you talk to somebody your age ... they have had these experiences."

A Dunckel Middle School sixth grader, Lindsay said watching the high schoolers model various situations (cigarette smoking, cliques) made more of an impact on her. Coming from other kids, "sometimes it's easier to see real-life situations you might be in."

Their parents were picking up advice, too. Down the hall in the FHS auditorium, speaker and educational consultant Fran Kick provided parents with the upbeat "Get a Kick Out of GRIP" portion of the program. Kick, meanwhile, spent Wednesday and Thursday morning at assemblies attended by all middle school students in the district, as well as at St. Fabian and Our Lady of Sorrows.

Kick's message at those assemblies was for youngsters to quit worrying about negative things in life and focus on the positives. He delivered the same message, in a different format, to the parents.

Another pointer, directed at the moms and dads in the FHS auditorium, was to be less critical and put more effort into communicating with their children as individuals. "Take the time to communicate, talk, collaborate."

Also, noted Kick, parents must try to "develop more of an intrinsic motivation in our students rather than relying on extrinsic, carrot-on-a-stick approaches."

That means instilling a values system that enables young peo-

■ 'Take the time to communicate, talk, collaborate.'

Fran Kick
—guest speaker

ple to see when they did the right thing, and for that to be enough of a reward.

Among parents at Kick's motivational presentation was Sharon Walker, whose daughter Lauren attends Dunckel Middle School. Walker said the talk was an effective reminder about the need for two-way communication. "You have to stand your ground" as a parent "But you have to hear the other side, too."

The fourth annual program was organized by Farmington Families in Action in cooperation with Farmington Public Schools. Held on a weeknight for the first time, event organizers said attendance was less than originally expected.

Estralee Michaelson, the school district's coordinator of Student Assistance/Health/Family Life Education, said it was by design for high school students



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMMON

Work it out: Several GRIP workshops enabled middle school students to hear high schoolers talk to them about adolescent issues and ways to avoid peer pressure pitfalls.

to work with the younger kids in delivering the GRIP message.

"Kids have told us that they want to be part of the program, part of the leading," Michaelson explained. "This is a start."

One of the high schoolers,

North junior Jane Gazman, said kids of different ages are more apt to connect about issues. "I think when kids tell you something, it's more sincere, from an age group they're going to be, than from a parent."

Gazman added that she hopes the younger students learned about how to deal with situations they'll likely soon be faced with, such as "parties with beer and drugs. It's real important to know how to take a stand."



Kick start: Fran Kick (above) gives hands-on advice for families to improve communication at FHS. Listening at right, Steve Dowhan and his son, Philip, a sixth-grader at O.E. Dunckel Middle School.



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NLRB looks into Botsford union certification vote

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A vote on union certification for workers at Botsford Hospital is being contested by both management and workers who are in favor of the union.

The National Labor Relations Board is investigating the election March 12-13, where 150 hospital food and housekeeping staff were to decide if they wanted to be represented by Service Employee International Union.

The union was approved by a 69-67 vote, an SEIU spokeswoman said. However, a hospital spokeswoman said the tally was 66-62 to turn down union representation.

Marriott Corp. management is protesting ballots cast by recently fired employees. The union is also contesting votes.

"It's going to take some work to finalize that election," said Stephen Glasser, NLRB acting regional director.

Botsford Hospital contracts its food and housekeeping services with Marriott.

SEIU filed unfair labor practices against Marriott with the NLRB over the employees' dismissals, which the union said stemmed from their organizing efforts.

NLRB has to decide whether the charges of unfair labor practices have merit before making a decision on the election.

"If some of those discharged employees are the ones being challenged, obviously there is an overlap there," Glasser said. "What we do with it depends on

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Stephen Glasser
—Acting regional director,
National Labor Relations
Board

the decision we make on the merits of the charges, and that hasn't been decided.

"If it overlaps, and we think the charges have merit, we might consolidate these proceedings."

SEIU officials contend the firings were an attempt by Marriott management to intimidate workers prior to the certification vote.

Employees were fired for violation of hospital policy, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Both sides have been asked to file position papers with the NLRB.

Management and the union have seven days after the vote to ask that the election be set aside, Glasser said.

"The hospital is getting on with business."

"I think things feel perhaps a little more on track now than before the election," said Margo Gorchow, Botsford Hospital spokeswoman. "I think this has been due to a transition of management ... and that transition is still on going."

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