

PBS host sends tough message to kids, adults

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Not long after Milton Creagh urged community leaders to target adults in the war against drugs, he grabbed Warner Middle School teens by the collective shirt collar and gave them a shaking.

The Atlanta-based author and host of the national PBS television program "Parenting Works," who estimates he has spoken to 500,000 American teenagers, captivated the Warner audience late Friday morning with a fast-paced presentation. It included some rap, dance, humor — but mostly, a tough message that needed to be heard.

"I don't raise the roof, I raise children," said Creagh, imitating the popular hand-boisting gesture often seen at sporting events.

The guest speaker stopped by Warner after giving the keynote address during Farmington Families in Action's 11th Annual Community Breakfast at the William Costick Activities Center. Creagh later gave similar talks to students at Farmington Alternative Academy and Power Middle School.

At one point at Warner, he imitated rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg while talking to seventh and eighth graders about the need to make the right choices early in life and the importance

of not paying serious attention to music and the movies. (Sixth graders were on a field trip and did not attend.)

"It's not about droopy pants," he said in the school's packed gymnasium. "It's about intelligence ... about being good human beings."

Creagh told teens the ability to make the right decisions often is clouded by drugs and alcohol, not to mention the glitz and glamour portrayed by Hollywood.

He recalled one incident where a group of teens who were drinking at a house party decided to imitate a stunt they saw in a movie. One young man laid down in the middle of a street

and, while his friends watched and laughed, a driver ran over and killed him.

"I don't care what you see on TV because TV will lie to you," Creagh said.

Several times during the first part of his talk, the 6-foot-7-inch, 360-pound Creagh admonished youngsters for laughing or not paying attention while he delivered his serious message.

"Everybody in America thinks this is all a big joke," he said. "We're in so much trouble in this country that it's absolutely frightening."

Most powerful was a segment

where Creagh asked white males, black males and females to stand up — at different times — while he cited telling statistics about each demographic group.

Alcohol or drug-related accidents are considered the number one cause of death among white males, Creagh said. Homicide tops the list for young black males; blacks shooting blacks, often friends, and often while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Creagh also said that one out of every four young women, of any race or background, will be sexually assaulted and one out of every two will be beaten during their life. Those attacks usually are committed by someone under

the influence, he emphasized.

He then asked students if drugs or alcohol ever cost any body in their families their job, marriage, freedom or life. Most raised their hands to at least one of the questions. Some were visibly shaken and moved to tears.

"Look around this room," Creagh said. "... Seventy percent of your families have been affected by this stuff."

According to Creagh, teens do have the chance to avoid such tragedies. "It has little to do with the decisions you make 20 years from now," Creagh said. "It has everything to do with the decisions you make right now. It's about doing the right thing, right now."

Say no from page A1

adults to get high," said Creagh, national spokesman for PRIDE, a national anti-drug campaign.

Take different approach
Creagh was the keynote speaker at the breakfast, part of a series of "Sober October" activities promoting the awareness of substance abuse.

With a voice that nearly shook the room, Creagh lamented how many of today's societal ills — from divorce to imprisonment to murder — are connected to the fact that today's adults at one point earlier in life decided to use drugs or alcohol.

And, when today's teens hear one thing, but see another about the topic from their parents or older relatives, they wind up turning a deaf ear.

"We've been telling kids to do this and do that," Creagh said. "And as a country, we haven't made a whole lot of noise about adult usage."

Getting religious leaders more involved in targeting adult men and women who use drugs or alcohol is another critical element to help curb the problem, Creagh emphasized. That means talking about it during actual services when there's a "captive audience," not during a weekday class attended by too few.

"Tie it to the scripture," he said. "And then, you've got to

get to the work place and, ... you've got to get to this thing right here."

Creagh pointed at a television camera and talked about how young people are virtually growing up the same all over the country — with the same fashions and attitudes — because of what they see on TV.

"We need to start using that thing to our advantage," Creagh said. "TV is the big equalizer."

Creagh concluded by telling the audience to "get busy" in efforts to spread the zero tolerance message.

"This is a lifelong process, so you better get in for the long haul," he said. "It's not for the faint of heart. I'm sick and tired of this, and you ought to be, too. So let's stop playing games, let's stop giving pep rallies, and let's get to work."

Right on target

Reaction from audience members was unanimous: Creagh's message was a winner.

"Good program," said Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss, with emphasis. "He spoke right to the heart of the issue. He nailed it right in the head."

"I thought it was great, very inspiring," said Warner Middle School teacher Dave Tyler. He then referred to Creagh's

subsequent speech at Warner, which took place later in the morning (See related story).

"If he can inspire adults, you know he'll have those kids in the palm of his hand," Tyler said.

Farmington High School Principal John Barrett and Julie Devine, president of the FHS parent booster organization, discussed what needed to be done to get the important message through to more moms and dads.

"I thought he was excellent," Barrett said. "And I think his message about (reaching) parents first is right on. How do you get that audience?"

Holding a meeting between school and religious leaders might go a long way toward achieving that goal, Barrett added.

"If you make it 'cool' to not partake in some of these destructive decisions, then maybe we have a chance," Devine said. "But I agree that the most important thing we can do is reach the parents. I thought it (Creagh's speech) was powerful."

Betty Nicolay, chairman of Farmington Families in Action, agreed that parents need to "draw the line. If they (young people) knew exactly how you feel about drug use, they'd be more apt to stay on the good side of the line."

Man charged in pizza shop smash and grab

A 27-year-old Detroit man was arraigned in 47th District Court on several charges following a smash and grab at approximately 10:30 p.m. Monday at Sammy's Pizza Shop, 3230 Grand River in Farmington.

Gregory Harold Leigh was charged Tuesday with breaking and entering; fleeing and eluding; and a misdemeanor charge for failure to stop at a traffic accident, according to a 47th District Court spokeswoman. His preliminary exam is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Wednesday before 47th District Judge Fred Harris.

Leigh was released on \$5,000 cash or surety bond, said Farmington Public Safety Department Director Gary Goss.

Maximum penalties if Leigh is convicted are 10 years in prison for the break-in and two years in jail and/or up to a \$500 fine for the fleeing and eluding; both are felonies.

For the third charge, Leigh

■ When police cars pulled around the vehicle, the driver of the truck rammed a Ferndale police car, causing about \$500 in damage, before pulling onto westbound Grand River.

could face up to 90 days and/or up to a \$100 fine.

According to police reports, an estimated \$200 worth of cigarette packs were stolen from the victimized store.

The suspect was stopped near 10 Mile and Novi Road by members of the Southeast Oakland County Crime Suppression Task Force Unit, following a high-speed chase originating out of Sammy's, police said.

Officers had followed the suspect's vehicle to Farmington from a parking lot at Seven Mile and Sherwood in Detroit, where surveillance units spotted a 1993 Chevrolet pickup truck. The truck was the suspect vehicle in a

Ferndale break-in reported on Oct. 14 and was also reported stolen to the Detroit Police Department.

The truck proceeded to Sammy's, where the driver pulled up to the front door of the closed store and turned the headlights off.

Moments later, a man was seen getting in and out of the truck. When police cars pulled around the vehicle, the driver of the truck rammed a Ferndale police car, causing about \$500 in damage, before pulling onto westbound Grand River.

Any charges for auto theft would originate from the jurisdiction where the vehicle was stolen.

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