

AHEC Team Seeks Solution To Teen Substance Abuse In Greenbrier County

Have you ever said to a child, "Don't do that!?" Many times he or she will answer back, "Why not?" During May, health profession students from the Southeastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC) discussed this common response from young people as it relates to substance abuse.

During a May 26-27 presentation at Western Greenbrier Junior High School in Crawley, the AHEC team, dressed in their "Why Not?" t-shirts, gave students some examples of the consequences associated with using alcohol and narcotics. The program was well received, judging by the response from teachers and students. At the end of the second day presentation, an AHEC team member asked the students if the program had made a difference. A ninth grade student commented, "It sure makes me think."

Some members of the AHEC team will present the "Why Not?" program on June 10 at the Greenbrier County Youth Camp to 4-H members. In addition, WVSOM graduate and Greenbrier Valley Medical Center intern Waid McMillion, D.O., is scheduled to present a program for parents in August during the new parents' orientation at WGJH. The Southeastern AHEC also anticipates that Dr. McMillion will present the project at the annual West Virginia Rural Health Conference in October at the Stonewall Resort.

Southeastern AHEC officials and team members hope the "Why Not?" program will become the foundation of an awareness and prevention campaign that will benefit groups of people throughout the community and improve public health by decreasing substance abuse.

The project was designed primarily to stem the growing incidence of clinical



AHEC team members include (front, l-r) Chanda Saucerman, Roseann Freundel; (back) Todd Durham, Dr.

McMillion, Mike Jarrett, Kris Van Wagner, Paton Smith, Brian Dickens; and (not pictured) Stacy Buchanan.

substance abuse cases in Greenbrier County, especially among teens. The AHEC team researched and developed a comprehensive educational awareness and prevention program on substance abuse, mainly targeting adolescents, but also including an educational component for parents.

The AHEC team responsible for the "Why Not?" program consists of McMillion; WVSOM medical students Roseann Freundel, Todd Durham, Kris Van Wagner, Brian Dickens, and J. Mike

Jarrett; WVU pharmacy students Paton Smith and Chanda Saucerman; and WVU physical therapy student Stacy Buchanan.

The mission of the Southeastern AHEC is to advocate for quality primary and preventative health care delivery to rural and underserved populations by improving distribution of health care professionals through academic and community collaboration by addressing one of the West Virginia Health People 2010 Objectives.

The AHEC experience allows the students themselves to serve as facilitators, generating ideas and taking control of their own learning experience. Emphasis is placed on the ability of the AHEC participants to work as a team, stressing the importance of defining the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team, the interaction between clinical and community problems, and the integration of interdisciplinary training and community service projects.