

Young users warrant drug program in lower grades

By Kathryn Reed



With youths starting to try alcohol and other drugs at an earlier age, agencies throughout the South Shore of Lake Tahoe are trying to do something to curb that trend.

Drug Store Project is dropping a grade level, with the March 31 program targeting sixth-graders for the first time.

The all-day reality program is designed to get students to think about the choices they make and learn about the consequences if they choose to use.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District had run the program for six years. State budget cuts eliminated the job of the person who put it on and consequently the program.

Lisa Huard is now working as a consultant for Tahoe Youth & Family Services in South Lake Tahoe. She is in the process of developing the daylong program with the assistance of dozens of agencies, hundreds of volunteers and the financial donations of service clubs and others.

Sixth-graders from all schools in the South Shore will be able to participate assuming their parents give consent.

“Last year alcohol use, marijuana and tobacco were up. We gather that information from Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Barton (Memorial Hospital) and probation,” Huard said.

Alissa Nourse, executive director of TY&FS, said, "Alcohol is always huge because it's available in homes for free, unlocked."

Huard said, "Prescription drugs are in homes and kids mix those things."

Drug Store Project shows students what it's like if they get caught with drugs " jail, court, counseling, overdosing, grieving parents, death.

Most of the people involved are not acting " it's a real coffin, a real doctor, real police officers, a real judge. Only the student is acting.

TY&FS follows up with students as part of the debriefing process. It gives counselors a chance to talk about some delicate issues with students, to let them talk about life at home, and to show students that they have choices.

For more information about Drug Store Project, contact Lisa Huard at lisahuard@sbcglobal.net. She is looking for donations and volunteers.