

STHS students demonstrate consequences of drug use

Publisher's note: This is one of a few articles about the Drug Store Project. This marks the 10-year anniversary of the program. This year's event will be April 2 at Lake Tahoe Community College. For more info about volunteering, donating or if you have questions, email Lisa Huard at lhuard@ymail.com.

By Kathryn Reed

"Pick your friends wisely."

That's one way Caleb Russell stays away from drugs and alcohol.

As a freshman at South Tahoe High School, students who want him to use illegal drugs or alcohol have confronted him.

"If you're not doing it, you're not cool" is what some kids think, Odalys Rodriguez said. She, too, is a freshman at STHS. But she's not buying the rhetoric.

Both students are part of the AVID program and are part of a group of 11 students who will be instrumental in the April 2 Drug Store Project. Now in its 10th year, the Drug Store Project teaches sixth-graders about the dangers of drugs. All of these AVID kids went through the program.

"It really did scare me," Rodriguez said of Drug Store Project.

Russell said, "It gives you an idea of what will happen."

They are proof that the program has worked.



South Tahoe High School students prepare for their roles in the April 2 Drug Store Project. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It's March 14 and the freshmen are in the middle of their second rehearsal. Music plays and a group dances. Three others are talking another kid into taking some Vicodin and mixing his drugs. He does. And then he passes out.

This is aptly named the "party scene" during Drug Store Project. What happens to that kid as well as the underage party hostess unfolds in other scenes.

While their part is a huge component of Drug Store Project, they are having fun rehearsing, learning lines, trading out parts and helping each other. When it comes to the real day they have to perform the skit nine times because the younger students come in that many groups.

"It sends a message to sixth-grade kids to avoid a party situation," teacher Julia Russell said. "They want to share with kids that you have to be aware at parties and make good choices."

Choices – that's the overwhelming message of Drug Store Project. That everyone has a choice to say yes or no to whatever they are confronted with and that each decision has consequences.

Part of the high school organization's mission is community service. This is the second year AVID students have participated in Drug Store Project, while previously Friday Night Live kids did.