

SCHOOL LIFE

6B

TUESDAY, February 25, 2014

Sexual education offered through peer discussions

BY CORINNE SAUNDERS
Staff Writer

CURRITUCK — Students formed circles on the Currituck County High School cafeteria floor last Tuesday morning, actively participating in a workshop about abstinence.

Some freshmen students giggled, and some obviously felt awkward because of the subject matter, but they still reported having a positive experience.

"I learned about refusing sexual contact," said Kathryn Cruden. "I think it will help teenagers learn how to say 'no' and when to say 'yes.'"

Alfredo Castanon said he also learned "strategies to refuse," while Wade Fallon said he learned "when to say 'no' and when to have sex."



STAFF PHOTO BY CORINNE SAUNDERS

Two Teen PEP facilitators (in black sweatshirts) read sexual scenarios to freshmen in their group. Students hold up fingers corresponding to one of three actions they discussed that they could implement in such situations.

"I learned how to control having sex or not," said peer pressure, how to say 'no' and how to talk to your boyfriend or girlfriend without them getting mad about teaching Teen PEP (Preven-

tion Education Program) with Michael Kraizer of the Currituck County Learning Center, said this class originated in New Jersey and is being offered for the first time in Currituck this semester.

According to its program statement, Teen PEP strives "to equip students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors to avoid pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections."

The takeaway points from this first workshop were that "there are way more healthy reasons to wait to have sex than to have sex as a teenager," and that it is important to communicate boundaries if students are in a relationship, Buzzard said.

"If you can't talk about it, you certainly shouldn't be doing it," she stated. In one workshop activity, students brainstormed all the reasons teenagers have sex, wrote them on poster board, then marked out "the reasons they decided were not so healthy," she said.

From the exercise, students concluded that peer pressure is a common but not necessarily healthy reason teens have sex. "Any message is more valuable coming from their peers," Buzzard noted. Fifteen junior and senior facilitators led about 75 freshmen in the workshop, which the facilitators led twice more that day, so all the school's roughly 220 freshmen could participate, Buzzard said.

Facilitators attended a three-day workshop in November that was focused on training the Teen PEP facilitators "to be experts in their field," Buzzard said, and the facilitators had to go through a rigorous application process, including demonstrating leadership in the school, to be accepted into the class.

"It's all really cooperative learning," she said, adding that the upperclassmen lead the workshops only after they have covered the same material in class.

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See DISCUSSIONS, 8B

Academic Achievement

ECSU students named All-Stars

JANUARY

Rotary Students

From staff reports.

Kindergarten registration for the 2014-2015 school year will be held on Thursday, March 13, from noon - 6 p.m. and on Friday, March 14, from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Parents and guardians may bring their child any time during the hours previously mentioned. To register for Kindergarten, your child must be 5 years old on or before Aug. 31, 2014. Bring the following to registration: your child, your child's birth certificate, your child's immunization/shot records and proof of your address, i.e. bank check with address on it, utility bill, etc. Call White Oak Elementary School at 252-221-4078 if you have any questions regarding Kindergarten Registration.

DISCUSSIONS

Continued from 6B

on team building. "With such sensitive material, it's important to get to know each other," she said. Participating freshmen had to obtain written permission from their parents, and very few parents opted their kids out. Some who did told Buzzard, "It's not that it's not

important, but [they said] they're talking about it at home," and they did not want their message to be confused. While Buzzard said she understands that, many students have told her sex conversations are not happening at their homes. Four of the peer educators have brothers and sisters in the freshman class, and "they're so excited for their brothers and sisters

to be in this group," she said. Five more workshops on other topics — the next, on contraception — will take place by the end of the school year, she said. One workshop will be open to families and to the public. "There are not a lot of schools in North Carolina yet that have adopted this program," she said, adding that contraceptive educa-

Walton shared many life experiences and "smiling moments." He talked about the importance of sharing a smile and the importance of making "smiling moments" for themselves. Judge Cole encouraged students to make a plan for their lives and not be discouraged when things did not happen as planned. He shared details of his own life that led him to become a judge. Both speakers stressed the importance of de-

students earned OSHA Certification through the CareerSafe program. CareerSafe lays a long-term groundwork for future career success. The students are (l-r) Tyler Lee, Chris Ward, William Wright, Dustin Woodruff, and Cordarius Swain. Their instructor is Dwayne Crank (right). Students receive training that provides basic safety awareness training to recognize, avoid and prevent safety and health hazards in the workplace.

tion has only been taught "for a couple of years now" in the state. Facilitator Jacob Schuster, a junior, said he thought his group did well. He wanted to be a role model because he cares about the younger kids, and his sister is a freshman, he said. "Our school in the past has had freshmen classes that were pretty terrible," Schuster said, adding that

he hopes to "get them going in the right direction." Facilitators Sadie Lindsey, a senior, and Natalie Owens, a junior, also said the inaugural workshop went smoothly. "I think they learned a lot," Lindsey said. "I think it's a little hard talking to freshmen; they think everything is funny," Owens said, adding that they did open up over the course of the workshop.

"There's more of a bond [when the discussion happens] with students," she said. Facilitator Michael Santini, a senior, said he was pleased that most students took the workshop seriously, noting that it was not as awkward as he anticipated. "It went better than I expected," Santini said. "The group seemed to be actually into it and involved."

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