

Coalition awards grant to Greenville Elementary for youth substance abuse prevention education



On May 15, 2017, during Greenville Elementary School's Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Education assemblies, Informational Speaker Cris Johnson had "Sketchy" tell 1,000 students in Grades K-4 the following: "There are good and bad drugs; a doctor, nurse, mom or dad can give you something; it is not OK to take things from strangers; it is not OK to take drugs from your classmates". Johnson's presentation, chosen for its prevention education tailored specifically for younger students, gave students information and strategies to deal with the topic of drugs.



Kindergarten student Emma Whittaker (left) assists Informational Speaker Cris Johnson, during Greenville Elementary School's Youth Substance - Abuse Education Prevention assembly, May 15.

GREENVILLE-Greenville Elementary hosted Informational Speaker Cris Johnson on Monday, May 15 during two assemblies for grades K-2 and 3-4. There were slightly more than 1,000 students that attended the assemblies.

Mr. Johnson is a dynamic entertainer who uses magic and a high level of energy to create a drug-free message. His assembly was chosen because it is prevention education designed for younger students, gives the students strategies to deal with being approached by someone with drugs, and teaches them why they shouldn't try drugs even once. Greenville Police Department School Resource Officer Ryan Borowske also had a role in the program.

Johnson captivated the students in a fun way, with some pretty serious topics surrounding drugs, such as saying "no" to anyone offering drugs, why they should never try drugs, who they should receive "good" drugs from and what addiction is like.

The Coalition for a Healthy Darke County (Coalition) provided funds for each student to receive drug-free wrist bands to help them remember the message. The assemblies were made possible through a grant for substance abuse prevention education from the Coalition.

The Coalition recently applied for and received grants from the Darke County United Way and the Greenville Rotary Club. Those funds were added to Coalition dollars to offer Substance Abuse Prevention Education grants.

"The collaboration among the Coalition, United Way and Rotary demonstrates the purpose of the Coalition, which is to understand and promote community decision making, collaboration and ownership among many different organizations to work together to resolve specific community challenges such as health and substance abuse," said Coalition President Sharon Deschambeau.

Greenville Elementary School Counselor Katy Copas and Principal Jody Harter applied for the Coalition grant because they recognized the need for drug prevention education at an early age.

Katy Copas shared, "We are so thankful to the Coalition for awarding us this grant. This grant allows us to bring in an engaging speaker, who not only educates students about the dangers of drugs, but also gives them strategies to deal with being offered drugs or unknown substances. Presenting this material at the elementary level will help to set students on the right path in making healthy choices in their lives."

"The Coalition intends to continue to share information and financial resources through grants with local schools in 2017-2018 to incorporate substance abuse prevention education," said Deschambeau. "We hope to change the culture in Darke County in a positive way."

In February 2017, Attorney General Mike DeWine's office released the recommendations of the Ohio Joint Study Committee on Drug Use Prevention Report.

In his letter to fellow Ohioans, DeWine wrote, "At least eight people are dying each day in Ohio from accidental drug overdoses. The opioid epidemic has spread to every county, city and village in Ohio. Without question, it is the worst drug epidemic I've witnessed in my lifetime."

DeWine noted that during the study, "The experts routinely told us that repetitive, comprehensive school-based education was necessary to successfully combat addiction. While schools are making an effort to provide this education, time and resource constraints are often barriers to these comprehensive efforts."

"Drugs have proven to be a problem amongst many of our students' families, stated Greenville Principal Jody Harter. We have had too many students lose their parents to drug overdoses."

Harter continued, "We are blessed to live in a community willing to help and provide resources so that we can educate and inform our students about drugs. I want to thank the Coalition for allowing us this opportunity to reach our K-4th grade students."