

## Annual 8th Grade Health Conference held at Great Plains Technology Center

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The annual 8th Grade Tillman County Health Conference was held at the Frederick campus of the Great Plains Technology center on March 26. Every 8th grade boy and girl in Tillman county got a break from regular school, climbed aboard the big yellow school buses and took a field trip to the Frederick campus of the Great Plains Technology Center. The general consensus among students is they learned more than they ever wanted to know about Sexually Transmitted Diseases, the effects of Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol and bullying.

The Tillman County Oklahoma State University Extension office has been coordinating this program for years. Carol Hart, the Family Consumer Science and 4H Educator for the office, explained experts from around the state converge on Frederick to provide as much information as possible in one day to these young ladies and gentlemen. The Tillman County Health Department and the Youth and Community Coalition send experts in each of the above mentioned topics. The presenters are armed with pamphlets, statistics, and videos as well as charts and pointers. The students are accompanied by teachers from their own school district. During the sexual abstinence and STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) sections, the local teachers leave the students alone with the expert presenters in hopes the students will be more comfortable with asking questions if they are not in the presence of familiar staff members. Hart reports this seems to be the most effective method for putting the students at ease with the presenters. The boys and girls are in separate rooms to avoid further embarrassment caused by mixed company during the discussion of sexual matters.

Nathan McGee, Tobacco Awareness expert with the Red River Tobacco Coalition gave a presentation about the effects of smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco on the body. Several students commented about the lingering effect of the photos of a 30 year old man who was dying from lung cancer. One student commented, "The man looked like he was 100 years old, just a few months after he looked perfectly healthy." The Wichita Prevention Network representatives showed a video of young people who had been addicted to drugs and alcohol. The young people told personal real life stories of addiction and how it negatively affected their lives and their opportunity to immediately further their education. Kim Booker, Certified Prevention Specialist and Brooke McCusiton, Regional Prevention Coordinator Director for Wichita Mountains Prevention Network were present and discussed with the students PACT 360 Training called WreckED from the [partnershipatdrugfree.org](http://partnershipatdrugfree.org).

Kallie Clemmer, RN with the Tillman County Health Department presented the STD and abstinence training and encouraged parents and youth to contact their office at 580-335-2163 for further information. They have pamphlets available and can answer questions as well as provide pregnancy testing and birth control in the form of condoms and contraceptives.



Area eighth grade students participate in Health Conference at Great Plains Technology Center.



Lori Willis, RN Adolescent Specialist, works for the State of Oklahoma. Her main goal is teen pregnancy prevention. She reported Oklahoma has the second highest teen pregnancy rate in the United States, New Mexico being number one. Willis reported she is assigned to a five county region: Beckham, Harmon, Greer, Tillman and Jackson counties. She stated that Harmon County has the number one teen pregnancy rate in the State of Oklahoma, Greer is second and Beckham is fourth. Willis reported she is available to teach two specific courses in the public schools including a program on Abstinence for seventh grade students which is 10 sessions long, and Condoms and

Noah Cooper finds a seat near the back of the room

Contraceptives classes for sophomores through seniors which is a 12 session class. She reports Altus and Elk City are the only two high schools in her region that have allowed her into the school to teach the high school class. She reported Tipton Public Schools allowed her to teach the Abstinence class for seventh graders.

Willis reported she has recently obtained a program called "Talking Birds and Bees with Ease" which is geared to parents and teaches them how to speak about sexual education issues with their children. This is only one session and she would like to be able to provide the seminar during the summer when she is not busy with the programs she provides in the schools.

A group from Oklahoma City, called Project Elevate, gave an entertaining presentation on the negative impact bullying has on young people. The three male members rapped and danced throughout their hour long program and seemed to connect with the students on a personal basis. The presenters told stories about how they have been affected by bullying themselves. The boys and girls both reported the graphic pictures of STD's and the effects of tobacco on the body were the most compelling aspects of the day long seminar. Though the students unanimously agreed the Project Elevate guys were the most fun.

Carol Hart reported she has a "Manners Matter" program that she brings to students throughout the county and is taking this seminar to Grandfield in the near future. She reported the program teaches students about table manners as well as other etiquette tips which can be of importance to young people throughout their lifetime. For more information about any of these programs, contact the OSU Extension office at the Tillman County Courthouse, 580-335-2515.