

Drug program begins with voluntary test

City schools start, others may follow

Local agencies are teaming up to promote drug awareness in county middle schools and high schools by offering voluntary drug tests.

Parents will sign up their students to be part of the random tests as part of the “Prevention, Not Punishment” program. Students can refuse to take the tests, but parents will be notified of the refusal. The program, which is modeled after the Cole’s Warriors drug screening program, will begin at Marion Harding High School and Grant Middle School next month.

Jodi Galloway, director of the Marion-Crawford Prevention Program, said she hopes the initiative helps parents and students talk more about the harmful effects of drugs. She said the program could expand in subsequent years.

“It’s one of those teachable moments,” she said.

“We want to celebrate the kids for not using (drugs).”

Galloway said there will be an incentive program and opportunities to win several prizes.

If students choose not to participate, she said, that opens the door for parents to ask them why and talk about the effects of drugs.

Nurses will administer the urine tests, she said, and only the health department and the parents will know results.

Though a majority of students don’t use drugs, Galloway said, marijuana and other drugs are rapidly becoming more popular.

Lt. Chris Adkins with the Marion Police Department said money from the METRICH-MARMET drug task force will pay for the tests.

“We want to put the money to some good use,” he said.

He said that, if a student tests positive for drugs, the police department will not move to make an arrest.

“Everyone knows there’s a drug problem in Marion and everyone’s trying to help,” he said.

Kirk Koennecke, principal at Marion Harding High School, said he looks forward to the partnership and to promoting proactive discussions between parents and students.

The Marion and Crawford County ADAMH Board, Marion-Crawford Prevention Programs, Marion Public Health, Marion County Police Department, Marion County Sheriff’s Office, METRICH-MARMET Drug Task Force, Fraternal Order of Police and bluefusion are sponsoring the program.

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