

Some Notes on a Follow-Up Juvenile Notification

May 24, 2006

*"If you want to be trusted,
be trustworthy"*

—Youth

*"Nobody said I plan to fail
or screw up...you never
planned to be here so take
another road"*

—Police Officer

*"These kids think they're
bullet-proof"*

—Parent

*"It's all up to you...you
gotta do the right thing..."*

—Resource Coordinator

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and Community Partner-
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Salisbury's Follow-Up Notification for Juveniles

On April 18, 2006, one month after attending the original adult notification session, Salisbury's Project Safe Salisbury hosted juveniles and their parents for a follow-up session. The session began at 6:00pm and four juveniles, their parents (three mothers and one father), a juvenile court counselor, the Project SAFE Resource Coordinator, and a Salisbury Police Lieutenant were in attendance. The purpose of the debriefing session was to hear about each youths' experience observing the earlier adult notification session. At the meeting, the Resource Coordinator led the youth through a group activity (Bio Poem) that helped them process their goals, dreams, and current challenges (e.g., peer pressure and making good decisions daily) and concluded with a pledge against gun violence.

What They Learned...

Overall, youth said "Project Safe helps criminals...it is to prevent gun crime and a program that helps people get back on track." The following are some of the main messages that youth recalled from the adult notification that would keep them from becoming part of Project Safe:

- Don't be in gangs
- Don't do drugs
- Don't hang out with the wrong people
- Stay away from guns
- There are stiff penalties for having a gun

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***I will never bring a gun
to school;***

***I will never use a gun
to settle a dispute;***

***I will use my influence
with my friends to
keep them from using
guns to settle disputes.***

***My individual choices
and actions, when
multiplied by those of
young people through-
out the country will
make a difference.***

***Together, by honoring
this pledge, we can
reverse the violence
and grow up in safety.***

(signature)

**Student Pledge Against
Gun Violence**

What They Learned (cont.)

Some of the youth expressed the need to make changes in their lives before they end up in the shoes of the adult offenders that they observed being notified. In fact, since the notification one youth said that he had “stopped using drugs” while another mentioned that “he saw that the consequences were serious and long-term.” The youth particularly mentioned the Assistant United States Attorney and the Rowan County District Attorney as memorable speakers. Parents noted that each speaker was sincere and had good intentions.

Although the youth attending the session were under court supervision for drug violations and not gun offenses, the youth still felt that their experiences of attending the adult notification session were positive. In particular, one participant said the adult offenders “probably started out like us.” In addition, the youth “didn’t feel threatened or scared,” but believed that “everybody up there was trying to be helpful.” However, one young person expressed that the information “would have been better to hear before I got in juvenile justice.”

Now What?

During the notification follow-up session, the Resource Coordinator led the group in a writing exercise. They wrote a biographical poem about themselves that focused on questions about their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and aspirations. She reminded them: “The decisions that you make every day determine whether you will reach that dream.” The purpose of the activity was to guide the youth in processing their goals, how to handle the challenges of peer pressure and the daily task of making good decisions, even when it comes to “straight talk about sex and condom use.” Each person was given the opportunity to share. One girl stated that “she wanted to be a pediatrician.” Afterward, they all read aloud a gun pledge, signed it, and gave it to their parent.

In closing, the resource coordinator asked each youth to respond to the question: “What do you need to do and/or what support do you need to stay drug free?” She also asked the youth to select activities that they would like to participate in, if given the opportunity (e.g., music lessons, baseball, golf). She collected these written request forms and would then try to connect them to resources in the community. The coordinator also extended an offer to the youth to “call her if they need anything.”