

# The Life Education Center

The Life Education Center (LEC) program teaches students in kindergarten through high school the benefits of making sound, healthy choices for their bodies and minds.

Two mobile units travel to 60 public and private schools in Kankakee and Iroquois counties -- reaching approximately 14,000 students annually.

The LEC's curriculum aligns with Illinois State Standards. Instructors use hands-on materials, visuals, discussion and role playing to teach students about the human body, the dangers of its abuse and about the different skills needed to deal with peer pressure. TAM, a transparent anatomical mannequin, teaches the younger students about their bodies and provides older students with an inside view of how chemical substances harm the body. LEC mascot, Harold the Giraffe and his friend, Jocko the Monkey, are favorites with the younger students who learn the importance of exercise and eating good foods.

The LEC also provides a forum for older students. A three-part research-based curriculum proven to delay the onset of alcohol use is taught to 6th, 7th and 8th grade students at participating schools and "Class Action" is being used with high school students. Junior and senior high school students, along with their parents, are encouraged to make a pledge to follow and support laws prohibiting underage alcohol use in the Partnership's annual "***Make a Pledge - Make It Stick***" social marketing campaign.

LEC program parent guides were paid for in part by the Illinois Department Human Services.



**Life Education Centers  
Pledge for Life Partnership**

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## Parents of Seventh Graders

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In the Life Education Center, seventh graders learn how to choose ***Wise Highs***, choices for a happy, healthy body and mind...***Choices You Can Live With!***

Your seventh grader will be involved in a new and exciting program entitled **Amazing Alternatives**. It is part of Project Northland, an effective research curriculum proven to delay the onset of alcohol use and reduce alcohol-related problems among young people.

Research has proven that delaying the start of alcohol use by as little as one year, can greatly reduce the chance of developing a substance abuse problem later in life. The role that alcohol plays in our children's lives – especially as a “right of passage” also points to the importance of prevention. Alcohol-related automobile accidents, for example, are the leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24.

Last year, sixth graders were introduced to Project Northland through the Slick Tracy Home Team component. Slick Tracy is designed to get parents and kids talking about alcohol-related issues while Amazing Alternatives capitalizes on the importance of peers.

While teachers are effective sources of factual information about alcohol, students find same-age peers the most credible. Amazing Alternatives consists of eight 45-minute classroom sessions of peer-led experiential activities. Peer leaders are selected by other students and trained by the classroom teacher. Students participate in group discussions, class games, problem solving and role playing.

# AMAZING ALTERNATIVES!

In addition to teaching skills to identify and resist influences to use alcohol, Amazing Alternatives strives to change the acceptability of drinking among peers and to encourage alcohol-free alternatives.

Over an eight-week period, students follow the stories of four seventh graders – Becky, Mike, Denise and Joe – via audio tape recordings. Each character’s story is used to promote discussions on issues related to alcohol use and alternatives to drinking. Here’s a recap of the weekly lesson plans:

## **Lesson One:**

After being introduced to each character, students describe their feelings about making the transition from the sixth grade to the seventh and discuss the changes they are encountering. They will review the time capsules they filled out last year (as sixth graders) during the Slick Tracy component of the program.

## **Lesson Two:**

Students play the **All Important Fact Game** to help them review the alcohol facts they learned in Lesson 1 and stimulate discussion on the consequences that result from using alcohol. A homework assignment requires students to interview an adult and fill out a worksheet about kids their age drinking.

## **Lesson Three:**

Students give homework reports and review the five Slick Tracy characters they learned about last year. They listen to the experiences of the four new characters and discuss alternatives to drinking alcohol.

## **Lesson Four:**

Students identify how people their age are influenced to use alcohol and learn positive, non-aggressive ways to say no to pressures to drink. They are divided into groups to perform role play scripts for members of the class.

## **Lesson Five:**

Each of the four fictional characters is faced with the decision to drink or not to drink at an unchaperoned party. Students discuss each character and what they have learned in situations that will involve several types of pressures and influences. Students are briefly introduced to the powers of advertising and the media.

## **Lesson Six:**

Mike makes the decision to drink and students hear reactions from the other characters and talk about the negative consequences that came from making a bad choice. Students will develop a better understanding on how the alcohol industry is trying to influence them through advertising.

## **Lesson Seven:**

Students learn that advertisements and mass media can be used to influence people in a positive way, too. Students have the opportunity to create their own advertisement idea that can be used to influence kids their age to use alcohol-free alternatives.

## **Lesson Eight:**

Students review the seven weeks and do activities to increase awareness of the alternatives to drinking. As part of a homework assignment in the last lesson, students were asked to fill out another time capsule and set short-term goals involving alcohol-related situations. Students share one example with fellow classmates. Time capsules will be returned to students next year during the PowerLines component of Project Northland.

## **Additional resources**

For a listing of local resources or additional tips to keep your child alcohol and drug free contact:

**The KAN-I HELP Information Network**  
**815.936.4606** or **www.i-kan.org**

A parent brochure entitled “*Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free*” also is available from the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. To obtain a copy, call **1.800.788.2800**. Or, visit the website at **www.theantidrug.com** for additional tips and advice.

**This is just one way that we can teach our children how special they are and how important it is for them to take care of their bodies and minds. These discussions will help them choose *Wise Highs...Choices You Can Live With!* To visit the LEC or to learn more, call Brenda Wetzel, LEC coordinator, at 937-2950.**