

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 61 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 of Human Services.



**Life Education Centers
Pledge for Life Partnership**

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Parents of Fourth Graders

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

Lessons focus on body systems and the effect that drugs have on the body. Students discuss what qualities to look for in a friend and how to deal with peer pressure. We encourage you to talk with your child about these lessons and to add your own family values.

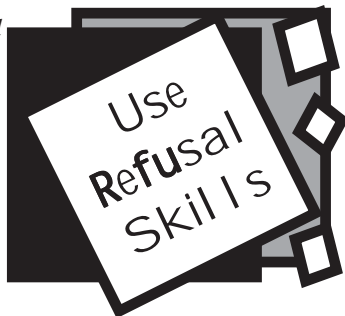
Topics covered include:

- ▲ An overview of the circulatory, respiratory, digestive, nervous and immune systems.
- ▲ How alcohol and nicotine affect the way our body functions.
- ▲ How drugs affect the digestive, respiratory, circulatory, nervous and immune systems.
- ▲ How to deal with peer pressure and other negative influences by using refusal skills so we can make the right choices for our bodies.
- ▲ The importance of believing in ourselves and having the confidence to make our own choices.
- ▲ The qualities that make a good friend and how that friend can influence us.

Review Questions:

By asking your child the following questions, he can share with you what he has learned in the Life Education Center:

- **Why was Ozone the Alien unable to build a human body?** *(The body is very complicated. It has many parts – each with different jobs, yet it all works together.)*
- **How do normal functioning circulatory, respiratory, digestive and nervous systems work?** *(The heart pumps blood through blood vessels. The respiratory system allows oxygen to mix with our blood through our lungs to go to all parts of the body. The digestive system takes our food to our stomach and intestines, then mixes it with our blood. The brain is part of the nervous system and sends messages all over our body. The messages are affected by whatever substances are in the blood.)*
- **What is the definition of a drug?** *(A substance, other than food, that changes the way the body works normally.)*
- **How do drugs differ?** *(Legal drugs have been tested by the government and are made in safe, clean laboratories. Medicines, when taken as prescribed by a doctor, change the body in a way to make it work better. Alcohol, cigarettes and chewing tobacco tend to alter the body in unpredictable and uncontrollable ways.)*
- **What are some ways to get away from friends and, sometimes family members, who want you to do something you think is wrong?** *(Use the refusal skills: 1. Ask questions - What ... ? Why ... ? 2. Identify --- Body Consequences; Friends and Family Consequences; Laws and Rules Consequences. 3. Suggest an alternative like, "Why don't we ...;" 4. Get away -- "If you change your mind, I'll be ...;" 5. Talk to an adult. Who can you talk to?*



- **What are some of the good things about having a friend?** *(It is someone to talk to, share fun times with and give you help when you need it. Good friends respect and care for you even if you say "no" to their bad ideas.)*

Follow-up Activities

The following activities can be used to reinforce the lessons taught in the Life Education Center.

- At the dinner table, have a debate on the topic "Smoking is tough and cool." Assign half of your family members to tell why this is true and half to give reasons why this is not true. When no one has any more reasons for "their side," have each family member tell his real opinion.
- On a car trip, have each member of the family tell five things they like about their friends, family members and people in general -- in their order of importance to them. For example, first is people who share; second, people who smile. Then have them say five things they like about themselves.
- Discuss the importance of liking and believing in yourself and having friends who reinforce healthy choices.
- Help your child practice saying "no" to a friend who offers her a cigarette. By pretending you are the friend, try to get her to smoke using several different arguments. Have your child respond to each situation by using refusal skills.
- Discuss the difference between legal and illegal drugs with your child. Talk about reasons why someone might knowingly put harmful substances into his body like nicotine when smoking or drinking too much alcohol.

These are just a few ways 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 to choose *Wise Highs...Choices You Can Live With!*

To visit the LEC or to learn more, call Brenda Wetzel, director of Life Education programs at 815 936-4606.