

## Local program doesn't use 'A' word

Director: Healthy Visions focuses on educating students on healthy relationships.

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The word "abstinence" may be absent, but the concept of healthy relationships remains the same, said Carole Adlard, director of Healthy Visions educational programs.

"Abstinence just has too much negative weight associated with it," she said.

Instead, the speakers and educators from the organization that promotes healthy relationships will approach students from the standpoint of self-respect, healthy dating and successful marriages.

"We are incorporating the domestic violence, dating abuse component with it as well, and that will give us more opportunity to seek funding, because there are more dollars available for that," Adlard said.

Recently Gov. Ted Strickland took a stance against funding abstinence-only educational programs, but said there are still grants available for districts that want to continue the programs.

Adlard said her organization has seen how students understand the risks of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, but they do not understand how to have successful relationships. They know how to ask each other on dates through text messages, but not how to follow dating guidelines, she said.

"There are very few people who have the blessing of stable parents," Adlard said. "We want to demonstrate that and model it for them. We're basically teaching them how to be happy."

Healthy Visions, which has been offering a class on abstinence-based education at Lakota West High School for the past few years, will now offer two courses — Sucker-Free Dating and Teen Health Relationships and Life Skills. It also is marketing schoolwide assemblies to target larger groups of students.

David Ashley, a 1999 Lakota East graduate, is one of the primary presenters for the program.

"I think the program that Healthy Visions offers is a holistic outlook toward relationships," Ashley said. "A lot of sex education programs just talk about consequences. We discuss benefits and negative consequences from any of those decisions. We try to help model healthy relationship choices."

Ashley said a program at East is not yet offered, though he is working to get one established. Any teacher may ask for presenters free of charge, he said.

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