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Renz Addiction Counseling Center
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Project Towards No Drug Abuse (TND) is underway at Elgin and Larkin High Schools and students are busy learning communication skills, the dangers of stereotyping and myths and denial of drug use.

The first session introduces Project TND curriculum and students learn about how to be a good listener and communicate effectively. Students are asked to listen to a fellow student and respond by re-stating what they have heard in their own words. This activity helps the listening student to confirm what they have heard and gives the speaking student the opportunity to agree or re-state in a different way the thought or feeling he/she are trying to communicate. This structured way of having a conversation is called "active listening" and is an important tool in communicating effectively. Students will be encouraged to practice this way of communicating throughout the 12 session program.

During Session 2, students learn that believing stereotypes can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies and can put one at risk, limiting the choices of both the person who is stereotyping and the target of the stereotype. Parents and societal stereotypes can be a strong influence. When parents expect their teenagers to conform to negative stereotypes, those teens are in fact more likely to do so, according to new research by Christy Buchanan, professor of psychology at Wake Forest University, (<http://phys.org/news175337559.html>). "Parents who believe they are simply being realistic might actually contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy," says Buchanan, who studies adolescent development and behavior. "Negative expectations on the part of both parents and children predict more negative behaviors later on." Students learn that they can rebel against this negative stereotyping by not misusing drugs. Renz Center Prevention Specialists share actual drug use prevalence information with the students to counteract their belief that drug use is more widespread among their peer group. If students understand that "not everybody is actually using drugs", they will not feel peer pressure to use drugs themselves.

Students confront common myths that facilitate drug use in the third session. They learn how to distinguish a truth from a falsehood, and how people use various beliefs to deny or justify their drug abuse. Students use their workbooks, engage in small group discussion, and participate in a game at the end of class to help them gain knowledge about what is real and what is made up.

After each session students play the "TND GAME". The game is used to promote student participation and reinforce learning. It is used to summarize each session at the end of class. The object is to advance around the game board as many times as possible. The team that goes around the board the most times by the end of the Project TND wins the game. The students are divided into two teams. The teams advance by answering session summary questions correctly and by positive behavior. The team can lose spaces by disruptive behavior. A reward system is part of the game structure. Small prizes are needed from the community (like water bottles, key chains, food gift certificates, etc.) to help make the game fun! - submitted by Carlos Chavez Renz Prevention Specialist and one of the facilitators of Project Toward No Drug Abuse.

For information related to the Project Towards No Drug Abuse (or to donate items to be used as rewards) call Ricardo Gasca, Prevention Coordinator, at 847-742-3545 x264.