

Schools

Above the Influence

Middle schoolers get anti-drug messages

It's only a half-day of school today, but it will be chocked full of anti-drug and alcohol messages at the Middle School.

The Fountain Hills Coalition, in collaboration with the state chapter of Students Against Destructive Decisions, has organized the "Above the Influence" day.

"We want to build up young people's skills and reduce their risk-taking behaviors," said Carole Groux, executive director of the Drug Coalition in town.

"The goal is to support young people in developing positive norms and in making healthy decisions."

Parents are invited to at-

tend today to hear the keynote speaker, Adam Brooks, starting at 9:55 a.m.

ATI is a national movement that has been around for several years, encouraging young teens to resist alcohol and drugs.

The sixth, seventh and eighth graders will be taught "refusal skills" to help them avoid alcohol, nicotine and other drugs.

"Students will be trained in effective communication, decision making and assertiveness skills," Groux said.

She commended FHMS Principal Tom Brennan for allowing the sessions today and the help of Jessica Smith, state SADD

director, for her efforts in coordinating the ambitious program.

Chris O'Mara, a community health nurse educator, will talk about tobacco awareness to sixth graders.

Stephanie Siete, director of Community Bridges, will provide seventh graders an overview of current drug trends.

Youths will be encouraged to focus on key choices that could lead to early experimentation with substance abuse and other high-risk behaviors.

Alan Haywood of the Department of Public Safety will talk to eighth graders, teaching them skills and strategies needed to resist

drug pressures.

Keynote speaker to close the sessions is Adam Brooks.

He will talk to the young teens about their choices and what it means to have a "true measure."

"We define ourselves by our evaluations at work or grades in school, and we even allow unhealthy people to tell us what our needs and wants are," he says.

"I say no more. We have to have true measures in our lives, measures that reflect an appropriate and healthy response to those outside influences that are constantly telling us that we aren't good enough."