

Press Release

Lyme/Old Lyme Youth Launch #ProAtBeingMe Campaign

Feb 2, 2017

#ProAtBeingMe is a social marketing campaign created by students at Lyme-Old Lyme High School with the goal of reducing youth substance use. The REACH Club (Responsible Educated Adolescents Can Help) created their original #ProAtBeingMe campaign to coordinate with the school's presentation by former NBA star Chris Herren on February 3rd.

Chris Herren is a former Boston Celtic basketball player who progressed from using alcohol and marijuana in his teens to cocaine, prescription pain pills and heroin as a young man. He recounts his life during his powerful presentation and listening to his story can be life changing.

The "ProAtBeingMe social marketing campaign has many parts including a student made video, posters, social media posts, a post-it note activity, a presentation by Chris Herren and follow-up activities over three weeks.

Junior Emma Sked and Sophomore Brynn McGlinchey are leading #ProAtBeingMe. Brynn described the process of developing the campaign. "In September we started working on the campaign to precede Herren's program and continue after. We have learned that a one-act prevention program is not effective by itself in preventing substance use. But if you combine a program with a social marketing campaign, then you can be very effective in reaching classmates and help prevent or decrease use of substances."

Emma continued, "We had a lot to learn, including what defines a social marketing campaign. Social marketing is advertising, but it is advertising for the purpose of changing behavior or promoting healthy behavior. The behavior we want to promote at LOLHS is youth staying substance free. We wanted a positive_campaign, not the same old 'don't do drugs.' Teens don't hear that."

"So we created #ProAtBeingMe," Sophomore Emily O'Brien explained. One of Herren's important messages is that if I am PRO at being who I am, then I don't need to use a substance to change me. We had a lot of help, especially from Ryan Lee, the Director of Interactive Marketing at Overabove in Essex.

Emily continued, "Our campaign started on Monday. We placed a huge #ProAtBeingMe banner on a wall in the Commons. During lunches students answered the day's question on a post-it note and placed it on a poster. And each got a piece of candy. Monday's question was "What is the best compliment you have ever received?" We had a terrific response. Each day there is a different question related to #ProAtBeingMe."

“The post-it note activity sets the stage and theme for Friday’s program with Chris Herren,” Sophomore Sarah Hayward explained. His key message is ‘Be yourself. You are good enough just as you are. Be proud of you.’

Sarah continued, “Immediately after Herren’s Friday program all students will receive #ProAtBeingMe wrist bands and then meet in homerooms for an extended discussion of Herren’s presentation. Students will write a reflection on how Herren’s message affected them. And then we will show our #ProAtBeingMe video. Emma Sked filmed and edited it and it is fantastic! She interviewed ten students who are representative of LOLHS. The questions she asked are the same ones for the post-it activity and all students end by saying, ‘I’m #ProAtBeingMe.’”

Brynn McGlinchey stated, “Over the next two weeks we will encourage classmates to post our hashtag #ProAtBeingMe on Instagram with their pictures that demonstrate their proud, good enough, confident and authentic selves. In school we will carry on the campaign by posting quotes from students’ comments on Herren’s program and from the post-it activity.”

Old Saybrook Rotary and the Visiting Nurses Association of Old Lyme generously provided additional funding to help defray expenses for #ProAtBeingMe.

REACH is sponsored by the Lyme/Old Lyme CASFY Coalition (Community Action for Substance Free Youth) and Lymes’ Youth Service Bureau with funding through a state grant to Child and Family Agency of SE Connecticut. For more information about the campaign visit www.proatbeingme.com or www.lysb.org

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