

Carroll County Times

Conference covers risky teen behavior

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BY ERICA KRITT, TIMES STAFF WRITER |

Maryland State Police Sgt. Andy Eways only had to mention one name to prove that gangs are a problem in Carroll County: Brian Hill.

Hill, who Eways says has affiliations with the Crips, made news recently when he allegedly tried to shoot a sheriff's deputy in Westminster. He is now being held at the Carroll County Detention Center without bail.

Eways said while the general public may have just heard of Hill, he's been dealing with him since 1999.

"[Gang members] are in our community, they live here," he said.

Eways was the first presenter at the 14th annual Risky Business Prevention Conference. The conference is an all day event put on by employees of the Carroll County Health Department, Carroll Hospital Center, Carroll County Public Schools and other organizations and community members throughout Carroll.

The event targets those people who may be dealing with teens and those who may want to know what some trending topics are for youth when it comes to risky behaviors.

The event had 300 people register, and those who registered were teachers, social workers, nurses and health department officials along with some parents, according to Kim Spangler, one of the event's organizers and the director of health education with the Carroll County Health Department.

Throughout Eways' talk he presented information on why gangs are here, what kind of gangs are here and what to look for in behavior to tell if people are in gangs.

He showed a slide that listed at least nine Crip gangs, seven Blood gangs and other gangs like MS-13.

Sandy Hansborough, who works with Junction Inc., a substance abuse treatment center based in Westminster, said learning about what to look for in teens when it comes to gang involvement is helpful.

She said she can learn how to approach the teens in her program and probe them about why they are involved in gangs and help them understand there are alternatives.

The event also included speakers from the Carroll County Youth Service Bureau's, Rape Crisis Intervention Service of Carroll County, the Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt and the Carroll County Health Department.

Topics included eating disorders, social networking, how teenagers make sex-related decisions, a program that uses the outdoors to help teens who are delinquent and what is in an energy drink.

Spangler said a lot of times the topics come from what are new issues and trending topics with teens, but they also come from requests.

"A lot of times we take ideas off the evaluations from last year's conference," Spangler said.

This year, Leah Rebert of Westminster addressed the crowd from a personal perspective. Rebert has an eating disorder. She urged the crowd to be brave and if they know someone struggling with an eating disorder to confront the person.

"Within the last year and a half I've lost four people to an eating disorder," she said.

Mary Carrier, who attended the event, said she was impressed by Rebert's presentation.

"I have to say that Leah touched my heart," she said. "There is such a stigma attached to it."

Rebert explained that her eating disorder was how she dealt with daily issues.

"It has nothing to do with food or the number on the scale," she said. "It has everything to do with coping."

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