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Activities promote drug-free lifestyle

By [Kyle Martin](#)
Staff Writer
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More teens are smoking marijuana than ever before, partly because they view it as less dangerous than other drugs, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Monitoring the Future survey.

That comes as no surprise to four students at T.W. Josey High School.

"Everybody smokes," said Conrad Wilbourne, a senior.



Counintess Gibson

Wilbourne and his classmates said that they haven't tried pot but that it's easy enough to buy at school and on the streets.

A lot of the students start smoking pot because of peer pressure and to look cool, they said. To fight that attitude, leaders at the high school joined a nationwide effort called Red Ribbon Week to bring awareness about the dangers of drugs. Students wrote essays, signed pledges and wore red ribbons to declare they would be drug-free.

A few of the essays were tacked onto the school's hallways.

One student obviously had a healthy respect for the consequences from home if he did drugs.

"My mom said don't do drugs because she'll whip me," the essay stated. Harder drugs seem to scare the student population.

Asked whether they knew anyone who smoked crack cocaine or methamphetamine, the students quickly shook their heads.

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"We've seen what it can do to people," said Councillor Gibson, a senior.

Markquis Burton, a junior, said the graphic television commercials aired by the Georgia Meth Project are effective in scaring students from trying the drug.

One senior, Kenay Phillips, credits part of her success of staying drug-free to playing basketball after school. Filling up her schedule gives her less time to get into trouble, she said.

Veronica Cummings, a guidance counselor, said the students seemed to absorb the message about the hazards of doing drugs during Red Ribbon Week.

Children are the products of their environment, so it's important for schools to do what they can to positively influence them, she said.

"We're trying to change the world, one student at a time," Cummings said.