

Education Forum Report Tuesday, March 1, 2011

On March 1, Education Forum was treated to a fascinating presentation on expansion of the DARE program (Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education), which SD54 has offered intermediate elementary students for many years. Presenters were Prince Rupert-based RDMP Cpl Anne House, Drug and Organized Crime Awareness Coordinator for Northwest BC, and Smithers detachment commander Staff Sgt Sheila White.

An expanded DARE seeks to have the program as part of the curriculum in every grade, K through 12. Cpl House noted this is already being delivered in an abbreviated form in some northwest school districts. Delivery is based on the CPEC (Community Prevention Education Continuum) model, which reaches beyond school walls and seeks to build a strong network of contacts and initiatives within the community to endorse a drug and alcohol-free lifestyle among youth.

Cpl House explained a successful CPEC program is intentionally developed, action-based and has the underlying common goal of drug prevention to keep youth healthy. CPEC defines drugs as any substance that affects the mind or body negatively, advocates total abstinence. Our skilful presenters faced some challenging questions about the realism of total abstinence, noting this to be an ideal but that any level of increased empowerment of students to make informed personal choices is to be celebrated.

Cpl House noted the foundation of the CPEC model is a set of 40 Developmental Assets that are based on youth development, resiliency and prevention research (for more on this, see the Search Institute, www.search-institute.org). She noted that research consistently shows that the more of these assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in a wide range of high-risk behaviors, including drug use. DARE has 28 of the 40 assets.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Browne
Chair, Education Forum