



Back to school bash encourages Colmer Middle students to look to their future (photo gallery)

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Beverly Tuskan -- The Mississippi Press

By

PASCAGOULA, Mississippi -- The rain did nothing to dampen the spirit of 167 students who showed up at **Colmer Middle School** to mingle, play games and listen to speakers Thursday afternoon.

Colmer hosted a Changing the Vision Back to School Bash to kick off the Changing the Vision theme for the new school year.

The theme is aimed at encouraging students to see a successful life in their future with new vision, said teacher Susan Stachowski.

The Parent Teacher Organization partnered with area ministers and several community organizations who set up booths in Colmer's gymnasium.

A \$14,000 abstinence grant from Mississippi's Office of Healthy Schools

allowed the school to purchase a new curriculum, called "Choosing the Best Path," to encourage abstinence among the students, said Stachowski, one of the grant facilitators.

"Rather than looking at abstinence from the sex point of view, we're going to be looking at the whole you, and taking control of your decisions and yourself, as it relates to your success in life," Stachowski said.

"So much media -- shows, movies, songs -- it's all about sex," she stressed. "We want to change that vision,



Enlarge

Beverly Tuskan -- The Mississippi Press

There were 167 Colmer Middle School students who showed up on a rainy Thursday, July 28, 2011, to attend the school's Changing the Vision Back to School Bash. After hanging out in Colmer's gym playing games, hula-hooping, shooting baskets and visiting booths from several community organizations, the students were assembled here in the cafeteria to listen to a variety of guest speakers. (Beverly Tuskan, The Mississippi Press)

Colmer Back to School bash gallery (5 photos)

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we want to change what they're seeing. We may not change it in the media, but we can change the way they're looking at it."

The ticket to the event was a white T-shirt with royal blue lettering given to students on the day they registered for school.

Words on the back of the T-shirts read "Don't Be Recyled. Stay Pure."

Colmer-Middle-Meth-Booth-Bash.JPG

Teachers received a "Life Coach" jersey because, in addition to teaching, they are coaching students to be successful in life, Stachowski said.

The Choosing the Best Path program will be taught during PE classes and through other programs held throughout the school year. The program is by Cliff Baskerville of Atlanta, who will attend the school's open house on Aug. 11 to share with parents.

BEVERLY TUSKAN/Press-Register

Janie Crapps of Jackson listens to Rodney Williams, who is manning his booth, Club Meth to Christ Ministry, during the Changing the Vision Back to School Bash at Colmer Middle School in Pascagoula on Thursday. Despite the rainy afternoon, 167 students showed up for the event that included games, prizes and speakers who were there to encourage students to stop and think about their choices and making the right decisions, also choosing the best path for themselves. Crapps is with the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

From the program, students can learn the facts about risks and consequences of sex before marriage, as well as the benefits of choosing healthy relationships, and develop the skills, character and commitment to remain abstinent until marriage, according to Jennifer Williams

with the PROMISS booth. PROMISS is a pregnancy resource center in Jackson County.

Williams' husband, Rodney Williams, also manned a booth, where he handed out copies of his book, "Club Meth to Christ," along with copies of his CD, "Rodney Williams True Life Story." He shared his own story about drug addiction and its consequences.

The Williamses are from Hurley.

Attorney Brice Wiggins and Mark Spicer with the Jackson County District Attorney's Office spoke about Internet responsibility, cyber bullying, making the right decisions and being responsible citizens.

Students heard music by Christian musicians Red Roots, a set of triplets who also hail from Hurley.

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