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By [Mitch Sneed](#)

Council on Substance Abuse teaches kids life lessons

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By William Carroll

Managing Editor

The Council on Substance Abuse hosted its first Leadership Conference in Elmore County and approximately 30 students participated in a range of activities geared towards teaching them preventative measures to reduce the possibility of alcohol and drug abuse.

COSA-NCADD Executive Director Shereda Finch said the conference was the first of its kind in Elmore County, and she hopes that the program will expand and continue in the future.

“The COSA was awarded additional contracts by the (Alabama) Department of Mental Health, including funds for prevention,” Finch said. “With those funds we started to do a number of things with respect to prevention and the Leadership Conference is one of those projects.”

According to Finch, four speakers spoke on a variety of topics.

Sebastian Goodson was the motivational speaker for the group according to Finch, he spoke about making the right types of decisions and avoiding poor decision making processes that can ruin ones life.

Speaker Cynthia Dunning spoke specifically about school violence, while Kimberly McKinney spoke about truancy issues, specifically how it affects overall academic success. Stephan “Idris” Mambazo spoke about HIV and STD prevention.

“We had a number of community agencies on hand as well,” Finch said including colleges who distributed information to the students.

Food for the event was provided by the Montgomery Area Food Bank and Finch said there were outside activities for the students as well including go kart building activities and a bounce house.

“Our goal is to be a resource for kids,” Finch said noting that there are already future conferences in the works. “The 12 to 17 age group is a very important age group. If you can intervene at that age it can intervene in a child’s life that has had difficulties or one who may be on that path to prevent current or future alcohol or drug abuse.”

Finch said that the group is expanding services in Elmore County and is looking at offering additional activities throughout the school year.

“We are looking to give kids the opportunity to be involved in something,” Finch said. “We are looking at additional workshops to offer. We are hoping to grow the program.”

Finch said that the first conference was recorded and that COSA will be providing copies to area teachers and counselors for use in educational programs.

“What is cool is having the community coming together,” Finch said of the event. “They understand the importance of having something for youth to do.”

For those interested in COSA and its programs more information can be obtained on the group’s website at www.cosancadd.org or by contacting them at (334) 262-1629.

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