

‘Kids at Hope’ taught to Pinal County staff

StandUp AJ anti-drug coalition briefed on its ‘cultural framework’

By Richard H. Dyer

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A youth-development strategy that demonstrates all children are capable of success — Kids at Hope — is being taught to employees in Pinal County governmental agencies and could be a tool used by a local anti-drug group. “It is a cultural framework. It’s not something that you do on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 o’clock at your school or at your organization to help engage your community, but it’s something that changes your entire culture,” said Julie Niven of Pinal County Schools with the Youth Justice Center during the June 30 meeting of StandUp AJ, Apache Junction’s drug-prevention coalition.

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Two of the Kids at Hope principles and practices involve connecting with all children in a meaningful and sustainable way; and teaching children to mentally time travel to their future in four destinations — home and family, hobbies and recreation, community and services, and education and career. (File photo)

Kids

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“We believe that children succeed when they are surrounded by adults who believe that they can succeed and that all children are capable of success — no exceptions,” she said of Kids at Hope.

Other principles and practices involve connecting with all children in a meaningful and sustainable way; and teaching children to mentally time travel to their future in four destinations — home and family, hobbies and recreation, community and services, and education and career.

Niven and Karen Shogren, a volunteer with StandUp AJ who works at Pinal County Juvenile Court Services, have been providing a four-hour training in the strategy with government employees. Shogren and Niven were trained in Kids at Hope through Arizona State University’s The Center for the Advanced Study and Practice of Hope.

Resources are at kidsathope.org.

“There are lots of connections and things on the website to help you see what Kids at Hope is about. Karen and I are in the process of getting ready to train all of the juvenile court services. We’ve trained all of the juvenile detention staff on the Kids at Hope philosophy,” Niven said. “And then we’re going to be training juvenile court services, all of their admin staff, probation, the CASA group that works with our youth out in the community as well as probation. And then the next training we actually have scheduled is we are going to be training the Florence (Unified School District) preschool teachers and staff and so we’re excited about that as well.” Niven offered training for StandUp AJ volunteers and community members with a workshop titled “Unleashing the Power of Hope.”

Kids at Hope training can be used in everyday situations, said Sgt. Ashley Thompson, an Arizona National Guard Counter Drug Task Force representative who took the training with her team.

“Going into it, I didn’t understand what it is we were going to be taught, but throughout the whole course I can tie back things to my kids. They talk about affirmations, things that I do as a parent, and I’m like ‘Oh. This is how we can make a positive impact on a larger scale’ and that there is science backing behind it. It’s not just a parenting tactic,” she said. “(If you guys have the ability to go to the training with them, I would say jump on it. You’ll be able to tie it into your own personal lives too.”

Joronda Montano, a mentor for StandUp AJ from the Tempe Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking and Drug Use, said she was trained in Kids at Hope nearly two decades ago after she started working in prevention.

“It really does have a positive impact on those kids who are going to be under that individual, so that was almost 20 years ago for me,” she said.

“Every day Kids at Hope just kind of guides and dictates the way I work with kids and so I think it’s really important to have it as a part of the community.”

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