

Kelvin shows students the face of addiction

Local high school wins provincial award for Drug Awareness Week

By Joe Rogers
Staff Reporter

The human hulk ambled across the stage, and he looked nervous.

He looked as if he could crush mere mortals with a glare, but instead, he told 150 teenagers in the audience how something as innocent looking as white powder had

reduced him to something irredeemably human.

The room was silent except for his soft-spoken narrative. Then, he too fell silent, said, "Oh shit," and started crying.

It was the first time the man in his '20s had relived his nightmare with cocaine for the benefit of others, and he set the tone for an emotional and educational two and half days at Kelvin High School.

"There were very few dry eyes," said Susan Hurley, a guidance councillor and chair of the five-member organizing team.

"To see strong people like that crying in front of them allows the students to connect with the reality of addictions."

Hurley was visibly drained from listening to all of the harrowing stories.

Drug and Alcohol Awareness Week has ran at the school for the last seven years, but on Nov. 20, Kelvin received an award from the provincial government for their human approach to promoting drug awareness and prevention.

Organizers withheld the name of the speaker who is trying to get back on his feet, and they want to avoid causing him grief in the community.

It's not about parading human trainwrecks for the sake of it, said guidance councillor Karen Rayter. It's about education and demythologizing drugs.

The program gives students living proof that drug addictions have consequences.

"This is probably the most pro-active drug program in high schools," said Rayter.

This year's program was geared towards grade nine and 10 students, who had to attend at least three sessions, but it was open to all students. Rayter estimated 700 students took part in some way.

Head guidance councillor Wendy Johnson-Brown said it was good to receive the award, but it won't be change anything at the school.

"We would continue doing this work regardless," she said.

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