

CHHS students fighting violence with kindness and ‘Toilet Talk’

BY TAMMY GRUBB

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CHAPEL HILL — Chapel Hill High School students will teach their peers Saturday how “Toilet Talk” can head off school and community violence.

The school’s SAVE chapter – [National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere](#) – posts a new flier inside restroom stalls every month with the results of “fun facts” polls, violence statistics and a note encouraging students to support victims.

“It’s just for fun but also to get people involved and aware of what’s going on,” sophomore Grace Dodge said.

She and others will teach the craft of “Toilet Talk” fliers at the [SAVE Summit conference](#) this weekend in Raleigh. They’ll explain the process and send out groups to conduct surveys in the morning, the students said. The groups will create a flier in the afternoon that they can use in their own schools.

This year’s conference – “Peace begins with a smile” – is a precursor to National Youth Violence Prevention Week, which runs April 3-7.

SAVE was founded in 1989 after a West Charlotte High School student died while trying to break up an off-campus fight. The nonprofit group, which works with local partners to prevent violence in communities and schools, has more than 2,100 chapters in seven countries and 48 states.

Jim Wise, chairman of SAVE’s Board of Directors, is a student assistance program specialist and leads the club at Chapel Hill High.

Their **club** raises awareness, promotes conflict- and anger-management skills, and helps build self-esteem as a way to stop violence before it starts, the students said. They meet once a week, planning activities from a No-Name Calling Week to mock car crashes before the prom; compliments with candy distributions in the halls; parking lot speed bumps painted with safe driving messages; and paper chains that reflect the meaning of kindness.

Teens are more likely to take a message seriously if it comes from a fellow classmate, the students said.

“You’ll be more comfortable talking to someone your own age and you can relate to someone your own age, rather than an adult who gives you homework or makes you take tests that you don’t want to do,” sophomore Ali Fahim noted.

The students also enjoy being able to make a difference, they said.

“I think that I continue doing it, because a lot of clubs at this school, they never meet, they never do anything, and I feel like this club, we actually do things that are benefiting people at our school and do something to make a positive impact,” sophomore Katie MacKinnon said.

Roughly 70 percent of students report seeing bullying at school, according to StopBullying.gov, but less than one-third of students who are bullied tell an adult. Chapel Hill doesn’t have as much overt bullying as other schools, the students said, but gossip and cyber-bullying through social media or texting is common.

“When it comes to bullying, the school really takes it seriously, and they want you to report it, and they take care of it,” Fahim said.

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