

# CHS receives grant for student nonviolence program

By **REBEKAH M. YEAROUT**  
The Press Register

For the second year in a row, Clarksdale High School has received a \$1,000 grant from the Allstate Foundation for its Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) program.

In December, the Allstate Foundation presented the National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere with a grant to help 15 SAVE chapters throughout the state of Mississippi. Although the grant originally targeted safe teen driving, the program has evolved to include all aspects of safety and is combined with the Clarksdale Municipal School District's peace program, said CHS principal Manika Kemp.

Many of the students in the CHS SAVE chapter came from Tiffany McGee's driver's education class, although McGee said some other students joined the program, too.

"It's a student-based program, basically the students come up with the programs that are kind of based on crime prevention, bullying, different things that the kids go through, and they come up with what I call the skills to deal with life," McGee said.

Kemp said the timing of the grant was perfect for the school.

"We kind of tied it into our district-wide program with our Days of Peace, so it came at a great time," Kemp said. "Being able to tie those two together, the peace program and this grant, continues to put in the forefront to students that there are different ways to handle situations. So we're tracking, again, the way in which we handle different altercations."

Carleen Wray, the executive director of SAVE, a nonprofit based in Raleigh, North Carolina, said they were grateful to the Allstate Foundation for providing the grant funds.

"We can't thank The Allstate Foundation enough. We're glad to team up with a foundation that shares the same desires as our organization — to promote meaningful student involvement, education and service opportunities in hopes to increase the safety of our youth," Wray said.

The program lasts all year, and there is a minimum of five activities the students are required to complete to fulfill the grant requirements. Although it's a school-wide initiative, there's a core group of student from McGee's class who offers suggestions about the activities they want to share with the school.

Kemp said a lot of students come to school wanting to talk about violence, bullying and other incidents, and she said her open-door policy is helpful for them.

"We find more students are wanting to talk about things. What's so ironic a lot of the things aren't happening on our campus, they're things in the community, but they know we have a listening ear," Kemp said, adding they are required to do certain activities each week and one of those included talking sessions among the students.

"Students stopped by

and they just received different information about different types of violence, different ways they can handle it, and we again, can add to it, we have our Student Resource Officers, we have our counselors available for just about anything. We have our mental health professionals who come on site and work with us," Kemp said.

SAVE participants—a mix of students from sophomores to seniors—signed a pledge to stay nonviolent, which is connected with the peace initiative that's ongoing throughout the district.

One of the next activities they're going to do is a "ghost day," Kemp said, where students will paint their faces white, wear all white and not talk all day long. Teachers and staff members know which students are participating, so there won't be any

problem with them staying silent.

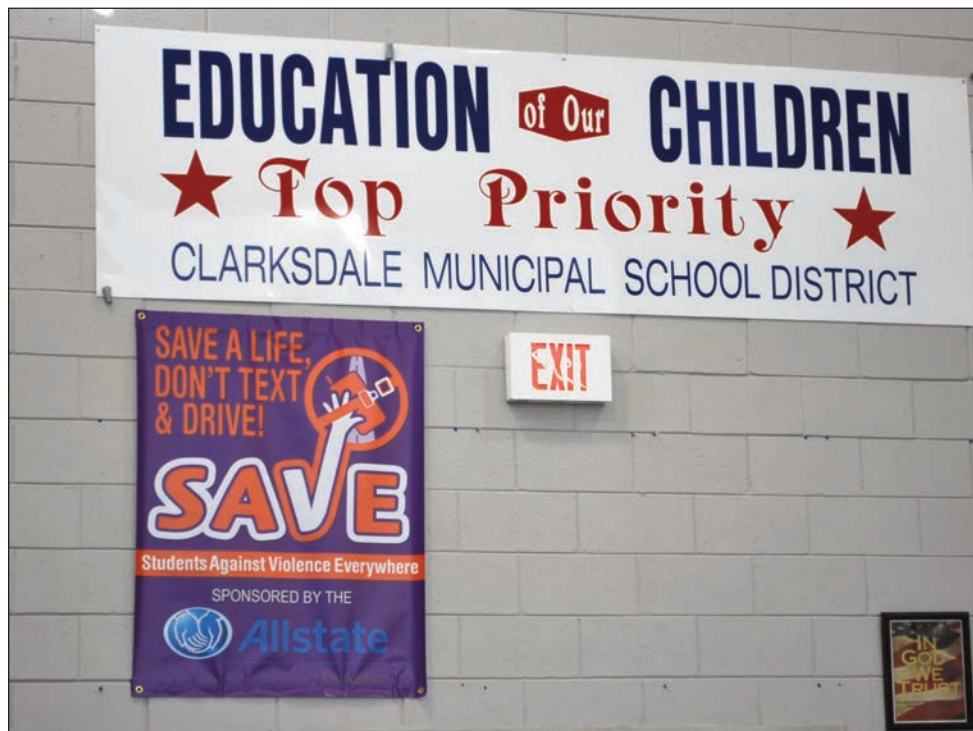
"It's a select group of kids who are doing it, and they're representing something they know who was affected by violence," McGee said.

Kemp said each student participating will be representing someone they know who is or was a victim of violence.

"The reason there is to show that through an act of violence, you can be here one day and the next day, you're gone," Kemp said. "I thought it was such a great idea, and they talked about it

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- Manika Kemp,  
Principal,  
Clarksdale High  
School



REBEKAH YEAROUT/The Clarksdale Press Register

This purple banner from Students Against Violence Everywhere hangs just above the main entrance to Clarksdale High School, commemorating the school for receiving a grant from the Allstate Foundation for the second year running for its SAVE program.

as a group. The kids are going to see the students at school one day, and the next day they'll be in all white. It's an impact we're trying to portray, and you see it all the time, a person is here one day and the next day, they're no longer with us. So I thought it was a good activity to have the students just think about that and how that impacts them."

Usually, students are spoken to by guest visitors about violence or shown pictures, often in an assembly setting, and by making it a more visual and personal event, the goal is to get students active with non-violence and peace events in the community, too.

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The parent advisory

committee is playing a role in the SAVE program, too, which helps the students retain the lessons learned at school while they're at home. Both Kemp and McGee agreed parental involvement is essential to getting the message of non-violence across to the students. The students are planning a peace rally, and the parent advisory committee is going to help out with it.

Kemp said she's definitely seen results from the program. CHS has seen a drop in the number of physical altercations; in fact, the school received a trophy from the district two years ago for having the lowest number of physical fights on campus.

So far, SAVE has provided CHS with several banners to hang around the school, and CHS was able to use some of the SAVE grant funds for activities in the school's Christmas carnival. Kemp said being able to incentivize high school students was a big deal for the school.

"We did a Christmas carnival prior to leaving the Christmas break, which is part of the 80 days of peace, so we were able to utilize some of the funding to purchase the games we played, and they were very excited about that. So utilizing the funds for incentives was a big piece for us," she said.

They have hopes they will receive grant funding for a third year, too, and Kemp praised McGee for her leadership.

"She took the challenge and ran with it, and each year she's done a better job, and the core group is different, so it shines a different light so it's added to the type of activities they're doing," Kemp said. "Hopefully, they'll have it available next year, and we'll see what we are able to do next year, if awarded."

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## MS lawmakers begin 4-month session

By **EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS**

The Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi lawmakers are beginning their four-month session, and they will spend the first few days getting organized.

This is the first year of a four-year term, and about one-fourth of the legislators are new.

The session begins at noon Tuesday and is scheduled to end in early May. Legislators will do most of their work on a more than \$6 billion budget during their final weeks at the Capitol. The new fiscal

year begins July 1.

Senators are electing a new president pro tempore to succeed Republican Giles Ward of Louisville, who didn't seek another term in the Legislature. The pro tem is the second-highest officer in the chamber and presides when Republican Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves is not available.

The House is dealing with contested elections for two seats, and the Senate must resolve a contest for one seat.

One of the contested House races is in District 79 in Smith and Jasper counties. The Nov. 3 general election ended in a tie

between five-term Democratic Rep. Bo Eaton of Taylorsville and Republican challenger Mark Tullos of Raleigh. Eaton won a tiebreaker by drawing straws, but Tullos said the race should never have been tied because he believes some votes were improperly counted.

If the House decides to seat Tullos rather than Eaton, Republicans will gain a three-fifths supermajority in the chamber, which means the GOP could enact tax changes without consulting Democrats.

The other contested House race is in District 98

in Pike and Walthall counties. Tasha Dillon lost by 144 votes to five-term Rep. David Myers in the Aug. 4 Democratic primary, but she said voting irregularities should invalidate the primary results. Both are from McComb.

The contested Senate race is in District 37 in Adams, Amite, Franklin and Pike counties. Former Sen. Bob Dearing defeated one-term Republican Sen. Melanie Sojourner by 64 votes in the general election, but Sojourner said voting irregularities should invalidate Dearing's victory. Both candidates are from Natchez.