

# S. Pike students join in toy drive

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The South Pike High School chapter of Students Against Violence Everywhere held a toy drive last week with a special exchange that took place at noon at the high school between student leaders and members of New Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

The group's sponsor Tyrone Varnado said SAVE is trying to promote good will, as the chapter is about promoting positive things in the lives of students throughout the year.

"It's all about decreasing the potential for violence," Varnado said. "We make efforts to decrease bullying and promote safety in the lives of students in all parts of their lives. We promote conflict management skills, encourage peer mentoring and promote safe driving."

He said all students in the junior high and high school are considered part of the SAVE chapter in southwest Mississippi. There 732 students in grades 7-12 in the South Pike School District, Varnado said.

"It's one big chapter. What we do is, when we receive a grant from SAVE, we use it to promote safe driving. SAVE is responsible for the "Every 15 Minutes" program we have. ... And, the organization has given students backpacks and wristbands. There are posters all over the school, on every hall, that have depictions against texting and driving, so at every corner they turn they see something that is about being committed to safe driving and safe schools."

The students brought wrapped gifts marked for a boy or a girl. Varnado said the students were excited about bringing gifts on Friday.

"I think it's heartfelt. We want to embrace the kids who are less fortunate than we are, and it goes a long



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Pictured are, from left, front row, De'Andrea Lewis, LaTyra Ashley, Ja'Quail Gardner, TaShella Hughes, Taylor Weatherpoon, Miracle Flowers, Lakerionte Lewis and sponsor Sara Martin; second row, New Zion Missionary Baptist Church Pastor Edgar Lewis, La'Dereka McNeil, Michael Simmons, Steven McNeil and Ty-

way to help kids learn that Christmas is all about giving," Varnado said.

Varnado said the school chose New Zion M.B. Church because they have a history of leading a toy drive in the community.

"All of these gifts go to New Zion because they have a toy giveaway every year, and we are just donating towards that effort," Varnado said.

The gift exchange was at the South Pike High School gymnasium between the Rev. Edgar Lewis and SAVE members who are also class leaders in the Mississippi

Scholars and BETA Club.

Varnado said the SAVE chapter will be working on Prom Promise in January. They will have "Every 15 Minutes," which is also sponsored by the Pike County Youth and Drug Court, in early spring.

"We will also have one

more blood drive in the spring," Varnado said.

Varnado said a large part of their SAVE programs are funded through the Allstate Foundation, who sponsors teen safe driving and are the sponsors for all the 15-Minutes programs of the SAVE chapters."