

# Prevention in Progress

A quarterly report from Operation Aware. Winter 2009 - 10



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## Racing for a Drug Free Life at Red Ribbon Run

Nearly 500 runners participated in the 8th Annual Red Ribbon Run. They enjoyed a beautiful fall morning as they tackled the 1 Mile Fun Run and the 5K race down Riverside Drive.

This year, the school with the largest percentage participation received the "RRRright Track"

Traveling Trophy to host for a year in their school. The honor went to Eisenhower International School, though Carnegie Elementary and Zarrow International School were close behind.

Many thanks to all the runners, parents, teachers and students who took part in the race this year. Congratulations to all our winners.

We were proud to have an impressive list of sponsors this year. Our thanks to the following for making this event great: H.A. & Mary K. Chapman Charitable Trust; Benefit Plan Strategies; Community Care; Zarrow Family Foundation; Cate Chiropractic; Tulsa



Running Club; Great Harvest Bread Co.; Wassco Bottling Company; Akin's Natural Food Market; National Massage Therapy Awareness Week; QuikTrip; and Food Pyramid.

Special thanks to River Parks, the Tulsa Police Department and Glen's Road Race Service.

The run is Tulsa's biggest event for Red Ribbon Week. The Red Ribbon Campaign is now the oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation reaching millions of young people during Red Ribbon Week.

## Reaching Out to New Communities Operation Aware In Muskogee Schools

By Wes Pebsworth, Manager of Program Operations

Operation Aware (OA) was excited to launch our inaugural partnership this fall with Muskogee Public Schools. Through a grant from the Muskogee Community Foundation, OA was able to present our curriculum in all 10 Muskogee Elementary Schools to students in 3rd through 6th grades. We also presented our curriculum to 7th and 8th graders at the two Muskogee magnet schools.

Our Prevention Educators (PEs) have all reported great experiences in Muskogee schools. The students have not had OA be-

fore and they are excited about every topic and are very receptive to the information in the OA curriculum. OA terms like "Road of Life" and "negative buddy" have quickly become a part of the students' vocabularies.

The enthusiasm of the Muskogee students has been paralleled by that of the great teachers, counselors, and principals in the Muskogee School District. Our educators have been warmly welcomed to each school we have served, and the classroom teachers have been very complimentary of both the OA curriculum and the PEs. In addition, the school personnel has been eager to work with the PEs to maximize the effectiveness

of the program. When the district notified the PEs of a week-long anti-bullying program the counselors were planning to implement in the schools, our PEs adjusted their teaching schedule to be sure they also taught the OA bullying lesson during the same week.

Operation Aware's partnership with Muskogee Public Schools has been a great success in its first year, and we look forward to continued collaboration for years to come. Muskogee is a great example of a school district that is taking a comprehensive approach to prevention education, and OA is proud to be a part of their efforts!

### Help Us Start the New Year Right!

Help Operation Aware start the year on a positive note by making a donation! Your gift will result in prevention education this year and resilient youth for many years to come. You can make a secure online donation today at [www.operationaware.org](http://www.operationaware.org) or mail a donation in the enclosed envelope.

## OA Supporters

Many thanks to everyone who supports Operation Aware. This is a list of donors from June 23, 2009 through November 20, 2009. All efforts have been made to make ensure the accuracy of this list. Please let us know if there is an error.

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Supporters Continued on page 3

## OA and EMSA Partnership Brings ER to Students



Beginning this year, Operation Aware and EMSA have begun a partnership which enhances the OA curriculum for students. For years, the sixth grade field trip has been an important teaching tool, bringing home the true impact of alcohol, smoking and drug use to students.

Not all schools are able to participate in the field trips so OA approached EMSA to see if it was possible to bring the emergency room experience to students in the form of first responders. The program has been a great success for both organizations and the students who have participated have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of the issues taught by OA. We are grateful to EMSA for sharing their knowledge and experiences with students and our educators.



Operation Aware's partnership with EMSA has been a wonderful addition to the prevention education we provide our students. Their expertise is invaluable, and their enthusiasm in partnering with us has made it a truly enjoyable collaboration.

Middle school students have always been receptive to our Emergency Procedures lesson, but having EMSA professionals show the actual equipment they use and share real-life stories of situations they have experienced, our presentations are now even more effective. Students are paying attention. And asking important questions. It is our hope and belief that what they are learning will guide their choices for years to come. We value EMSA for helping make these lessons as memorable as possible.

*Kristin Pebsworth, Prevention Educator*

## An Educational Classroom Visit

*By Jeff W. Kendall, Arvest Bank, OA Outgoing Board President*

I would like to share an experience with you. Last week I visited an OA classroom presentation at Hamilton MS. Jeni Dolan was the Prevention Educator. The topic for this eighth grade class was boy/girl relationships. You may not realize that part of our curriculum is identifying healthy relationships with the opposite sex and avoiding negative consequences such as teen pregnancies, STD's, and physical and emotional abuse. The risks of unhealthy relationships can be as devastating to their lives and the lives of others as substance abuse.

Jeni did a fantastic job of holding the kids' interest and presenting information that is critical to them. Hamilton Middle School is in a TPS school district that has lower income families with fewer two-parent homes. These kids seem to be exposed to more risky behaviors and with less parental guidance. It's certainly a different environment than when I was in Junior High School!

I wanted to observe this classroom environment and subject matter because it was so different than the last classroom I visited. The previous one was in an elementary school in a more affluent district. The topic was how substance abuse wreaks havoc on your body. Lots of body organs were on display for show and tell.

It opens my eyes every time to the good work that our PE's are doing in the schools. By seeing how these kids absorbed this information that Jeni presented, it re-affirms my belief that we are making a critical difference in the lives of kids. That's what we're here for, isn't it?

### Comments from Teachers About OA - 1st Quarter 2009

"My students really enjoyed the program (and our presenter). One student talked to her mom about what she's been learning, and her mom quit smoking!"

"This was the first time I had this program in my class. I think it was wonderful!"

"I love the Operation Aware program. The teachers are well prepared. I learn something new every time."

"My kids are talking openly about tough topics."

"My students are more thoughtful toward others feelings."

"The kids are talking and asking questions. I've noticed them writing about things that they've learned in their daily journals, parents have commented they are talking about it at home."

"My students aren't the only ones who learned - I did, too!"

"The students are applying the concepts at other times and during other discussions."

"I believe kids understand the importance of making good choices better after Operation Aware."

# Top 25 Parenting Tips

1. **Start early.** Kids are hearing about and forced to cope with tough issues at increasingly early ages.
2. **Initiate conversations.** Often times the conversations won't happen unless you initiate them.
3. **Don't be afraid** to discuss difficult subjects. For your kid's sake, try to overcome your nervousness and bring up the issue with your child.
4. **Create an open environment.** Children will be willing to talk and ask questions if they feel they can get straight answers and won't be criticized or teased for not understanding. It is up to you to create this safe and open environment.
5. **Communicate your values.** Take the opportunity to be the first person to talk with your child about tough issues.
6. **Listen to your child.** Catch the opportunity to listen even when you're driving or pushing the shopping cart.
7. **Give accurate and age-appropriate information.** When we talk about sensitive issues try to have the facts. It might make you more at ease.
8. **Try to be honest.** Whatever your child's age, they deserve honest answers and explanations.
9. **Be patient.** It can feel like forever before your youngster gets the story out. Don't be tempted to finish their sentences.
10. **Use everyday opportunities to talk.** Kids tend to resist "formal" discussions about today's tough issues. Watch for the opportunity to bring up the topic you want to discuss.
11. **Talk about it again, and again.** Young children can only take in small bits of information, they won't learn what they need to know from one discussion.
12. **Put your child's safety first.** Some of the information you give to your child can be essential to their health and safety.
13. **Acknowledge your children's fear.** Take the opportunity to reassure them of their safety.
14. **Listen well.** When interacting with your child, focus on what he is saying to you. Listen — and watch — for his verbal and non-verbal communication clues. For instance, when playing a game, focus on what your child is saying to you, and use the opportunity to "discover" your child, his thoughts, dreams and ideas — rather than just on winning the game.
15. **Teach well.** Observe what's happening and take advantage of "teachable moments."
16. **Show them you like them** and help them like themselves. "I love you" is not much without "I like you."
17. **Send the right messages.** Values are learned through family connections. Children learn by the verbal and non verbal messages they receive.
18. **Mind your model.** What you do speaks louder than what you say.
19. **Monitor the media.** Limit the TV and Internet exposure to only the programs you feel are appropriate and communicate your values.
20. **Use caution with punishment.** You can't make a garden by just pulling weeds.
21. **Keep your adult perspective.** The rest of their childhood and your parenthood begin now.
22. **Take a stand.** Don't cave in to your child's assertion that, "Everybody else does it (or has seen it)."
23. **Hold family meetings.** Regularly scheduled family meetings can provide children and parents with a place to talk about concerns and opinions.
24. **Partner with the school.** Encourage your child's involvement with the school and use the school as your ally.
25. **Talk with other parents.** You are not alone. Many parents believe the same things and experience the same difficulties you do.

*Adapted from Raising Good Kids in Tough Times by Dr. Roger McIntire and Talking with Kids about Tough Issues by Children Now and Lynne S. Dumas.*

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OA is in our 30th Academic Year serving students in northeastern Oklahoma and we are ready to celebrate! Plans are underway for a big event to recognize this achievement and you are invited! More details will be sent to you soon, but rest assured a great committee is working hard to make this an event to remember! Please contact the office if you are interested in helping.

## Success on the Links - Third Annual OA Golf Tournament

The Third Annual Operation Aware Golf Tournament was our largest ever! More than 30 teams completed during a morning and afternoon flight at the beautiful Cedar Ridge Country Club.

Many thanks to Chairs Brent Parsons and Charlie Strauser and their hard working committee for making this a great event.

In addition to the competition on the links, participants were able to enter a raffle for two sets of Callaway Golf Clubs and a Golf bag, participate in a live auction for a pair of airline tickets generously donated by American Airlines, win great door prizes donated by companies across Tulsa and participate in a 50/50 Putting Contest.

Plans are already underway for the Fourth Annual event. Mark your calendar now for August 2 at Cedar Ridge Country Club!



### Thanks to our 2009 Golf Tournament Sponsors!

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## OA Calendar

Spring 2009  
30TH ANNIVERSARY  
EVENT

Watch for more details soon!

August 2, 2009  
FOURTH ANNUAL GOLF  
TOURNAMENT

Cedar Ridge Country Club  
Team and sponsorship information  
coming soon.

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