

“Visions Of Change; Teens Speak Out”

Students Take A Stand Through Art

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- Community Educator for The Advocates, Heidi Cook

BY YANNA LANTZ

One in three teens is in an abusive relationship. This abuse can be physical, emotional or verbal. Out of a survey of 150 local teens, 78 percent said they know a teenager who has experienced dating violence and 69

percent said they know of a teenager who has experienced sexual assault in the Wood River Valley.

On Feb. 7 from 3:30–5:30 p.m. at Velocio Coffee Shop in Ketchum, more than 35 local teens will be featured at an open house exhibit to kick off National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

The exhibit, titled “Visions of Change; Teens Speak Out,” is presented by The Advocates’ teen intern program, ETCs (Every Teen has a Choice: challenge change community), and showcases the work of Wood River High School students supporting a compassionate community through activities

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selected as part of the Wood River Foundation’s WOW class projects.

The paid teen intern group was created a year and a half ago.

“Through a variety of projects we act as educators and peer influencers, which not only increases healthy relationships but leadership skills as well,” the ETCs self-made website stated.

The afternoon offers a detailed look at students speaking out against dating violence through the use of images and words.

“Photographs and words are two of the most powerful ways to create social awareness and change among today’s teens,” said Heidi Cook, community educator and teen intern coordinator for The Advocates. “These projects encouraged students to think about their ideals on building healthy relationships and then enabled them to share those thoughts in a creative and meaningful way.”

The powerful “Photos For Change” project was selected by Chris Koch’s student leadership class to convey their ideas and thoughts on healthy relationships through powerful images. Local photographer Kat Smith generously donated her time and talents to provide the images for the exhibit.

“By doing this project I learned a lot about the culture of violence and how much of a problem it is even around our own community,” said Bailey Cleven, Wood River High School student. “I really liked the ability to express my opinion and show my friends what matters to me.”

Students from Caitlin Renz’s English as a Second Language class elected to use their words to influence social change as part of a statewide effort to engage young people to join the movement to create a compassionate community. These strong teens share

their personal views and experiences on healthy relationships through the project and will read their own poetry as part of the Feb. 7 open house, beginning at 4:30 p.m.

Community members are invited and encouraged to attend the “Visions of Change; Teens Speak Out” exhibit, now on display at 601 Sun Valley Road, Ketchum. Live music will be provided, courtesy of Sage School student Sofia Drougas, and hors d’oeuvres will be served. The moving photo exhibit will also be on display throughout February in recognition of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month at Java in Hailey, from Feb. 8–14 and Iconoclast Books from Feb. 15–21.

For more information on The Advocates, visit [www.theadvocatesorg.org](http://theadvocatesorg.org). For more information on ETCs, visit <http://theadvocatesetc3.wix.com/etc3#>.

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