

Operation Right Choice

“YOU CAN CHOOSE YOUR CHOICES BUT YOU CAN'T CHOOSE YOUR CONSEQUENCES”

Bigger, Better and Off and Running for a Sixth Year Program Overview

Six years ago a handful of youth from Marcum Terrace met with Tim to discuss issues and problems in their community such as drugs, crime, lack of jobs and positive things to do. They wanted to be part of the solution not the problem.



One month later, Tim wrote a grant to receive funding to launch Operation Right Choice. Since that time, over 70 youth living in and around public housing communities in Huntington have successfully completed the program. Operation Right Choice focuses on youth 11 – 17, and helps to lay the foundation for making right decisions concerning education, substance abuse, teen sexuality, under age drinking, youth violence, and healthy lifestyles.

The first meeting was held at the Community Room at Marcum Terrace and a few months later the youth spent three days converting an old maintenance storage room into a nice teen center where they continue to meet today.

The majority of the funding for this program comes from the US Department of Education through the Governor's Safe and Drug Free Communities Grant. Additional funding has come from the Cabell County Youth Violence Steering Committee, the WV Prevention Resource Network, Appeal Youth Services, RAZE, Huntington Museum of Art, Cabell County Board of Education, and donations by various community agencies.

Today, graduates are college students, managers of area restaurants, employed part time or full time, and drug free. Several of them continue to come and serve as mentors to the new students.

Graduates of Operation Right Choice have been instrumental in:

1. Creating ten works of art displayed throughout Huntington through the ArtWorks Program.
2. They formed the first Cabell County Youth Tobacco Prevention Chapter and have led the state of WV in tobacco prevention/education efforts that have resulted in a reduction of tobacco use of WV teens by over 32%.
3. They have written and produced radio and TV commercials concerning underage drinking.
4. They have successfully planned and coordinated three Middle School Teen Institutes with over 250 middle school students attending from four other counties.
5. They have served as Youth Staff at the WV Teen Institute for two years with over 300 high school students attending each year.
6. They have served as the Huntington Youth Council under the mayor and provided input to local and regional leaders about issues such as drugs, crime, jobs, and interests of youth.
7. Today some are college students, football players, cheerleaders, honor roll students, band members, actors in their school and church plays, mentors, leaders, motivational speakers, and positive influences in their communities.

Positive Impact

Over the past year, ORC students have been very active in many different projects.

Peer Mediation/Conflict Resolution

Sixteen ORC students have been trained in Peer Mediation/Conflict Resolution through a grant from the WV Prevention Resource Network and the Cabell County Sheriff's Department.



Under-Age Drinking Commercial

Six ORC students wrote, produced, and starred in an under-age drinking commercial that is now shown on TV throughout the region.



Middle School Teen InSTITUTE

Last October, ORC students provided the foundational leadership for the third annual Middle School Teen Institute. Over 100 middle school, high school, and adult staff attended this two-night three-day leadership training retreat.

Students were trained in various prevention workshops focusing on tobacco, drugs, and youth violence.

55 Best Things About West Virginia

ArtWorks was recognized and awarded a plaque from the West Virginia State Journal for being one of the “55 Best Things About WV”.



ORC students have successfully completed ten ArtWorks Projects, and six of those projects are sculptures in highly visible places throughout Huntington.

RAZE – Teen Tobacco Prevention

ORC students have been instrumental in providing leadership for the RAZE Crew at Huntington High School.

They have hosted information tents at every home football game, in the hallways of the school and during various other events such as health fairs and pep rallies.



They have also been involved in a RAZE event during half-time of a Marshall University men's basketball game.



They have also been instrumental in training other students who have launched tobacco prevention/education chapters at their schools as well.

OPERATION RIGHT CHOICE MONTHLY REPORT NOVEMBER 2004

New Staff Hired

Christy Mulligan has been hired by the Huntington Housing Authority to assist Tim White, Resident Support Services Supervisor, with overseeing and implementing all the programs targeting and supporting youth.

On Tuesday, November 22, over 20 former and new students gathered with Tim and Christy to begin the sixth year of Operation Right Choice.



This year, the foundational curriculum is Project Towards No Drug Abuse and Project Towards No Tobacco Use. These two researched based programs consist of 10 sessions, each designed to inform and education youth about the dangers associated with drugs and tobacco.

Christy has also started a Girls Nite Out which is held every other Tuesday at the Teen Center and allows the girls to get together and do fun things and discuss issues they may be facing or needing advice on.

The goal for Operation Right Choice for the next twelve months is to impact 75 youth, ages 11-17, living in and around our public housing communities in an effort to reduce and/or eliminate the use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, and youth violence. Our desire is also to instill in each one a sense of hope and desire for a better and brighter future that is tobacco, drug, alcohol, and violence free.

