

School Assembly Program Kicks Off Its Third Year Of Service

"Addiction – The Game No One Wins" is off and running in its third season. The interactive addiction awareness assembly for youth in grades 6-9 has proven to be a popular program in Missouri schools, according to program presenters Beebe Heil and Laura Morris.

"We've got a full schedule ahead of us," Heil said. "Missouri schools are very eager to provide any kind of prevention education to their students, and they welcome the type of program provided through the Alliance."

According to Morris, the 45-minute assembly presents facts about all addictions and the associated risk factors with an emphasis on gambling.

"We created this program, under the direction of the Alliance, to address all addictions, including gambling," Morris said. "There are a lot of programs in our schools that educate youth on the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse, but there is very little about other addictions, including gambling. This assembly addresses risk factors and good decision-making in an entertaining format."

The assembly is sponsored by the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling and presented by the Second Chance Foundation, a non-profit organization from Jefferson City. Heil and Morris are the co-founders of the Second Chance Foundation.

After each presentation, educators from each school are asked to provide a critical evaluation of the assembly and its message.

"The evaluations really help us to ensure that our message is on target," Heil said. "We always look

forward to seeing what the educators have to say. This age group is a tough crowd, so it's always nice when teachers and counselors reinforce the effectiveness of our program."

An educator from Brashear Middle School in Kirksville stated, "It was great that the focus was on gambling, which is not often discussed or focused on. Students probably don't even realize it can be an addiction."

An educator from Parkway Central Middle School in Chesterfield, which hosted the program last year said, "The assembly was both educational and thought-provoking. With the varied activities and the interactive format, Beebe and Laura delivered a serious message in an entertaining fashion. The presentation served as a springboard for continued dialogue about the effects that drugs and gambling have on a family."

Another teacher, from Hazelwood West Middle School, wrote, "I think that it is safe to say that your program was certainly very effective. Anytime that the level of awareness is raised on such a crucial topic, as you are doing with your Second Chance Foundation programs, children and their families benefit. The entire program was also very age appropriate."

Goals of "Addiction – The Game No One Wins" include:

- To educate youth about the dangers and risk factors of addictions, including gambling;
- To raise awareness among educators and parents about the dangers of addictions, including gambling;

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Team Takes Addiction Prevention On The Road

It may take a lot of energy to keep up with Beebe Heil and Laura Morris, but they aren't tired yet. The two-woman team is owner of the Second Chance Foundation and the creators and presenters of "Addiction – The Game No One Wins," an addiction prevention assembly program.

Sponsored by the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling, the approximate 45-minute in-school assembly is part of the Alliance's youth gambling prevention program.

Both Heil and Morris have performing backgrounds, but after becoming frustrated with the acting options available in the Jefferson City area, they began looking at other types of opportunities where they could use their talent.

Heil, who also works with the Council for Drug Free Youth, credits Carol Reichard, director of the Jefferson City Council for Drug Free Youth, with providing the idea of assembly programs. She said Missouri's public schools are very receptive to free assemblies on addiction and character issues.

Heil and Morris then contacted school principals and counselors and found that a program on respect for others was needed. That was the beginning of



Laura Morris (left) and Beebe Heil travel the state to present "Addiction-The Game No One Wins" to students grades 6-9.

Second Chance. Now Second Chance, a non-profit organization, conducts assembly and classroom programs on respect, bullying, tobacco prevention and addictions.

"We really believe that these are issues that face

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What a great year so far! For the first time, the Alliance held its first Responsible Gaming Education Awareness Month. Activities, training, events and educational exhibits filled every week during August.

We have so much more in-store this year, too.

As the president of the Missouri Council on Problem Gambling Concerns, Inc., I have been a longtime advocate for problem gamblers and their families. I also am a licensed practicing counselor, a certified compulsive gambling counselor in Missouri both and a nationally certified compulsive gambling counselor II and nationally approved supervisor. The Missouri Council is approved nationally to provide certified compulsive gambling counselor training. It has become a meaningful aspect of my life and work to advocate for problem gamblers, their families and their communities. Because compulsive gambling issues are a major part of my life, I'm looking forward to this year in helping to further problem gambling services for Missouri residents.



I am proud of the fact that the Alliance continues to be a national leader of problem gambling prevention programs and treatment. We're also fortunate to have such a committed group of individuals representing our Alliance members. The amount of time and effort these individuals put into the Alliance's various programs is immeasurable.

We also have a growing number of experts in the field, who are joining as participating members. Plans are underway for a Midwest regional conference on problem gambling in 2004. This will be an important part of our ongoing education efforts. It is encouraging to see so many individuals and institutions stepping up to the plate. If you are not part of our Alliance, consider this an invitation to become a part.

We're looking forward to another productive year for the Alliance and the continued growth of problem gambling awareness programs in Missouri.

Recognition For Youth Addiction

Several individuals from Alliance member organizations received the Alliance's Service Award for their work on the production of the award-winning video and facilitator's guide, "Beat Addiction – Choose the Right Path." The awards were presented during the annual meeting of the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling on Aug. 13 in Kansas City.

The Service Award was created to recognize extraordinary contributions to the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling over the course of the past year by an individual or representative of a Missouri Alliance member organization.

Although more than 100 individuals were involved in the creation of this video and facilitator's guide, this core group of individuals were the primary organizers, creators and producers of the video program.

Individuals who received the Alliance Service Award are:

Gary Gonder, the executive producer of the video and director of communications for the Missouri Lottery;

Frank Finley, director of the video and producer for the Missouri Lottery;

John Wells, assistant director for the video and assistant producer for the Missouri Lottery;

Shelly Perez, producer of the video, co-writer of the facilitator's guide and the responsible gaming program coordinator for the Missouri Lottery;

Kyle Heislen, writer and editor of the facilitator's guide and supervisor in Guidance & Placement for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and

Melissa Stephens, assistant producer of the video, co-writer of the facilitator's guide and problem gambling program coordinator for the Missouri Gaming Commission.

Alliance Welcomes New Participating Members

The Alliance recently welcomed four new members into its ranks: the Association of Charitable Games of Missouri (ACGM); treatment provider Arlene Miller of St. Louis; Co-Occurring Distractions of Lee's Summit; and N-the-Wrightway Corporation of Kansas City.

The ACGM is an organization that represents charities that sponsor bingo. Organization representative Larry Loos is serving as point-of-contact for the organization.

Arlene Miller is a certified compulsive gambling counselor. She also conducted several counselor certification training sessions for compulsive gambling counselors, as well as numerous advanced counselor training sessions. She is in private practice.

Co-Occurring Distractions is represented by Ernie Gauthier, a certified compulsive gambling counselor. Gauthier has provided advanced training workshops for certified compulsive gambling counselors and has worked as a substance abuse counselor. He is in private practice.

N-the-Wrightway Corporation is represented by Neville Wright of Kansas City. Wright's organization helps Kansas City-area residents with a gambling problem to regain control of their lives.

Number of calls to 1-888-BETSOFF (1-888-238-7633)

	2002	2003
January	254	269
February	211	305
March	241	270
April	273	268
May	133	309
June	270	262
July	182	310
August	255	227
September	229	236

Grants Allow Problem Gambling Awareness Expansion, Research

A study of Missouri's voluntary exclusion list and the creation of two problem gambling awareness programs for youth are now in the works due to funding from the Port Authority of Kansas City.

The three grant winners were announced during the annual meeting of the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling on Aug. 13 in Kansas City. The funds for the grants were collected from the riverboat casinos, which made financial contributions to a Problem Gambling Fund as part of their agreements with the City of Kansas City to locate within the city. The Problem Gambling Fund is administered through the Port Authority.

"The Port Authority and its partners, the Missouri Gaming Commission, and the casinos operating in Kansas City (Isle of Capri and Ameristar) take the issue of problem gaming very seriously," said Linda Ward, vice chair of the Port Authority and chair of its Problem Gambling Committee. "The recent grants are designed to address two areas. The first will fund research at Harvard to learn more from those who have chosen to exclude themselves from casinos. Missouri is pioneering in this field, and we intend to continue our leadership by understanding more about the outcomes for those who choose the exclusion program."

Ward said two other grants will provide prevention education to teachers and students.

Tri-County Mental Health Services of Kansas City was announced as the recipient of a grant to provide public awareness services to youth in the Kansas City area. The grant will allow Tri-County to expand its existing programs to include problem gambling. The grant will allow for in-service training for school personnel, classroom presentations and an increase in the number of students who participate in Tri-County's Teen Institute and Youth With Vision programs.

"We will be educating youth leaders, who will go back to their

schools and pass on the information," said Vicky Ward, manager of Prevention Services at Tri-County. "We have found that it's much more effective when the teens take the lead in educating their peers on addiction."

Vicky Ward said the program also includes school in-service programs, which involve trained adults working with students to reinforce the messages on problem gambling issues. She said the program also calls for problem gambling prevention information being shared with Kansas City area youth organizations, such as Boys and Girls Clubs and Scouting programs.

A grant was also awarded to the University of Missouri-Columbia's Wellness Resource Center (WRC). With this grant, WRC is planning to provide training and coordinate a statewide problem gambling program for college students. WRC will assist with the evaluation of problem gambling on campuses and provide resources for schools to use to educate students about problem gambling.

Kim Dude, director of WRC and the project director of Missouri Partners In Prevention, said that a partnership between all 12 of the state colleges and universities already exists through the Partners in Prevention program. She said she plans to use this partnership to broaden the problem gambling program.

"Before I wrote the grant, I did a needs assessment with (other colleges and universities), and they all felt like it was a problem, but they didn't know to what extent," Dude said.

Dude said the WRC program will include three basic elements: determining the extent of problem gambling among college students through a health survey in February; completing a workshop and/or provide training at an annual spring conference to train personnel on how to address the issue; and creating a flier or brochure for college students on problem gambling.

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all schools, whether they're wealthy or not," Heil said. "The difference is that many of the urban or poorer districts don't have the resources to sponsor many programs for their students."

Second Chance relies on grants and contracts from various companies, organizations and businesses to help take their various programs on the road to schools throughout the state.

Morris said they were thrilled to be able to be a part of the Alliance program and being given the opportunity to expand their programs into addiction prevention.

"It goes back to the fact that an addiction is an addiction is an addiction," Morris said. "The one thing that blows us over is how naive people are to gambling. Kids aren't even aware that it is a potential problem."

Heil said that they're glad they can be part of problem gambling prevention efforts.

"Today's children are growing up in a different time than when we grew up," she said. "I didn't grow up when there was legalized gambling and billboards all over the place. There are even TV and radio ads. Gambling has become a large part of our society. You can't

get addicted to something that you've never been introduced to, but today kids are getting introduced to gambling every day."

The duo rely on their business manager, Jayne Dunkmann, to find schools interested in hosting an assembly, but programs can also be booked by contacting Alliance members.

Morris said the assembly was first billed as a program on gambling and other addictions, but they found that schools were not interested in gambling prevention programs because they were unaware of gambling problems. The program was revised to include all addictions with an emphasis on gambling.

"The response has been really, really good," Heil added. "A lot of teachers have admitted that they didn't realize the dangers of gambling."

Heil said she hopes the assembly provides both the educators and students the ability to recognize the different stages of addictions and to get help early.

"I think the primary message is that addictions are controlling, and yes, there is hope," Morris added. "But I think the best message a student can take from this assembly is never get started."

Upcoming Alliance Events

November

2-4 Look for the Missouri Alliance at the Missouri School Counselors Assn. meeting at Tan-Tar-A in Osage Beach. The Alliance also will be presenting a training workshop on "Beat Addiction – Choose the Right Path."

14-15 Look for the Missouri Alliance at the Missouri School Teachers Assn. meeting in St. Louis.

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- To raise awareness of the help line phone numbers, including 1-888-BETSOFF, and the availability of free treatment.

For more information about the Alliance's programs, visit its Web site at: www.888BETSOFF.com.

For additional details about "Addiction – The Game No One Wins," please contact Shelly Perez, responsible gaming program coordinator for the Missouri Lottery, at (573) 526-7467.

1-888-BETSOFF

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Help Line Facts

The following information was provided by Life Crisis Services in St. Louis. Life Crisis Services operates 1-888-BETSOFF (1-888-238-7633), a 24-hour help line service for callers seeking help with a gambling problem.

From January to June 2003:

- 1,684 calls compared to 1,382 calls during the same period the previous year.
- 75 percent of callers called about their own problem or suspected problem with gambling, while 25 percent were calling about a loved one with a gambling or suspected gambling problem.
- Most of the callers were male (52 percent); a significant margin over females (43 percent). The remaining 5 percent of the callers were not evaluated.

- Average age of callers was 39.6 years. Men and women were slightly different with reported ages of 37.3 and 42.4, respectively.
- Racial spread of callers was fairly consistent with general population in this region with 71.3 percent Caucasian, 15.3 percent African-American, 1 percent Asian, 1.2 percent Hispanic, .01 percent Native American, and 10.9 percent were unknown.
- Marital status of callers was diverse with 40 percent married, 24.9 percent single, 11.5 percent divorced, 2.6 percent separated, 3 percent widowed and 17.6 percent unknown.
- The counties from which the most number of calls were received are Jackson with 494 callers and St. Louis with 429 callers.

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A research grant awarded to the Division of Addictions at Harvard Medical School will be used to evaluate the state's Voluntary Exclusion Program. This grant will help to determine the effectiveness of the exclusion program, as well as provide needed demographics of the program's participants.

Melissa Stephens, problem gambling program administrator for the Gaming Commission, said shortly after the Missouri Legislature approved an expenditure of \$25,000 for research renewable annually, the Gaming Commission found out about the grants being offered through the Port Authority.

"We decided to combine our efforts to maximize the value of the research," Stephens said. "This research will follow up with individuals on the disassociated persons list to evaluate the effectiveness of the self-exclusion program and treatment services in Missouri."

Stephens said the research should be a valuable source of information for all problem gambling programs.

"Most of the research done on problem gamblers includes a very limited sample pool," she said. "Our database is a list of 6,000 individuals, much larger than most previous studies on problem gamblers."

Updates on the new programs and research will be included in upcoming issues of the *Bets Off Bulletin*.



Missouri Department
of Mental Health



Missouri Council on
Problem Gambling
Concerns



Missouri Gaming
Commission



Missouri Lottery



Missouri Riverboat
Gaming Association



Port Authority of
Kansas City, MO

The Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling's mission is to heighten public awareness for the dangers of problem gambling; develop prevention and education programs for gamblers of all ages; and direct problem gamblers and their families to the 1-888-BETSOFF help line