



Colorado Alliance Brings SAVE to Community

The Mesa County Medical Society Alliance (MCMSA) has been involved with Stop America's Violence Everywhere (SAVE) since its inception in 1995. The Alliance started by donating materials like the *I Can Choose* activity books to local elementary schools. Soon after, the organization decided to create a project that would be more educational, and initiated a program for second grade classrooms in the community. They created a *Hands Are Not For Hitting* project, with a toolkit that contains banner materials, tempera paint, placemats, *Hands Are Not For Hitting* workbooks, flash cards, stickers, cassette tape, T-shirt and lesson plan, which includes a variety of teaching suggestions.

Realizing the potential for spreading the message to a broader community, MCMSA quickly partnered with Hilltop Community Resources, a local organization that provides leadership for community-based services designed to foster self-sufficiency and enrich the quality of life. Together, they hosted a walk and vigil for Violence Awareness Day at the Mesa County Courthouse. The second graders displayed artwork they made with the toolkit during a vigil, and the event received wide-reaching print and television coverage.

In addition, for the past 10 years, from mid-October through the beginning of November, MCMSA has been displaying the artwork created by the second graders at the Mesa Mall in the clock court in conjunction with the Hilltop Domestic Violence Awareness Display. The Mesa Mall also holds a safe trick-or-treat event on Halloween that hundreds of children attend. The students bring their families and enjoy sharing the banners with them. By displaying the banners at the

mall, the MCMSA receives additional exposure and reinforces the message about domestic violence to the entire community.

“Even high school kids love to look at the banners and remember when they did the project,” said *Hands Are Not For Hitting* project coordinator Uschi Hall. “We are very excited that this program is still very strong after more than 10 years.”

Many teachers and school counselors continue using the materials from the toolkit throughout the school year, reiterating non-violent conflict resolution to students in the first through fourth grades.

“Every year, we receive many requests for kits and SAVE materials and we provide every elementary school counselor in our Grand Valley School District with SAVE materials for every student,” said Hall.

In an average year, the MCMSA's *Hands Are Not For Hitting* project has 1,000 student participants, and about 7,000 students receive SAVE materials.

“For the past four years I have been coordinating the program, but it would not be possible without the great ground work of the previous coordinators and all the members assembling countless kits and boxes,” said Hall.

For more information about the MCMSA's *Hands Are Not For Hitting* project, contact Uschi Hall at uschibill@yahoo.com.

This edition of Network News was written by Leia Vincent.