

Experiential Learning through the Health & Wellness Peer Education Program

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Introduction:

The National Peer Educator Study (2011) found that undergraduate peers are the single most potent source of influence on undergraduate student's affective and cognitive growth and development. Students often feel more comfortable when learning and talking with peers in comparison to faculty.

The Health and Wellness Peer Education program was established on the Murray State University campus during the Fall 2016 semester.

- The purpose of this program is to empower and engage the campus community through outreach and advocacy to help make Murray State a healthier and safer environment for all students.
- By training peer educators to discuss health behaviors of concerns like alcohol use, sexual assaults, and domestic violence, this creates a safer environment with more open dialogue on these health behaviors for the students on campus.

Training and Funding:

The Murray State Peer Educators are trained through the NASPA BACCHUS Initiatives CPE Training. A national training program, which teaches students on peer educator related topics such as roles and responsibilities, bystander intervention, and crisis response.

Funding for the Murray State University's Health and Wellness Peer Educator Program were secured through partnerships and sponsorships from various entities to promote community engagement and involvement

- Murray State University Strategic Plan Grant
- Aetna Better Health for Kentucky sponsorship
- WellCare Health Plans CommUnity Health Investment Grant
- Qdoba partnership

Programming:

• Safe Spring Break - March 2017

- Impact size of about 900, about 100 active participants and 800 passive participants



• Great American Smokeout - November 2017

- Interacted with 200 individuals
- 52 signed pledges to remain smoke free
- 3 began their journey to become smoke free



• Peer Mentorship and Partnership with Murray High School

- 42 Students in MHS Interact Club/Youth Council
- Hosted their own Great American Smokeout event in conjunction with MSU – interacted with over 100 students
- All 50 Quit Kits were taken by students to share with Family members to get them to quit



Conclusions & Recommendations:

The Murray State University Peer Educators focus on topics such as cigarette and tobacco use, safe sex and effective birth control options, and alcohol and drug use.

- In Kentucky, 9,000 lives and \$1.92 billion in health care costs are due to tobacco related costs, about \$590 million are covered by Medicaid (Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow 2017).
- Kentucky ranks 36th, 28th, and 31.5th in Chlamydia, Gonorrhea and Primary & Secondary Syphilis, respectively (AIDSVu, 2014).
- 1,825 college students are involved in alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes.
- 793,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking or experiencing alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2014).
- The statistics show the importance of communicating effectively with college students regarding these topics.

References:

- Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow. (2017). *New Kentucky Coalition Launched to Improve Health, Reduce Costs of Smoking*
- NASPA Foundation. (2001). *Peer Educator Study*.
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2014). *Alcohol Facts and Statistics*. Doi: 301.443.3860
- AIDSVu. (2014). Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Retrieved from <https://aidsvu.org/state/kentucky/>