

Shatter The Myths 2018 Overview



Empowering Youth to Shatter the Myths about Drug Misuse

For the eighth year, Mentor Foundation USA partnered with the Embassy of Sweden, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and other key partners to host a ‘Shatter the Myths’ youth rally, giving youth a voice to address the threats of drug and substance misuse.

‘Shatter the Myths’ is a program designed to dispel myths that youth have about drugs such as “Everybody is doing it” and “One time will not harm me.” By focusing on the innate talents’ youth have and providing a platform to make their voices heard, youth become their own advocates for staying drug-free. This innovative peer-to-peer model for drug prevention is well-documented and nationally recognized.

The 2018 ‘Shatter the Myths’ event was held on April 11th at House of Sweden in Washington, D.C. 150 high school students from Washington, D.C. interacted with a top U.S. scientist and inspiring guest speakers to “shatter the myths” about drugs and substance misuse, and pledge to also stay drug-free. Participating schools included: Idea Public Charter School, Phelps ACE High School, The Field School, Cesar Chavez Public Charter School and Capital City Charter.

Monica Enqvist

Head of Press, information and Culture Department, Embassy of Sweden

In place of H.E. Karin Olofsdotter, Ms. Enqvist welcomed the students and addressed how drug and substance misuse is not only a problem in the U.S., but also globally. Ms. Enqvist also spoke about the Embassy's ongoing support to this program and how Sweden is the country with the lowest drug use rates among youth in the world.



Dr. Ruben Baler

Scientist on the Neurobiology of Drug Abuse & Addiction,
National Institute on Drug Abuse

Dr. Baler was on hand to present the students with science they could easily apprehend and help “shatter any myths” that students faced pertaining to drugs and substance misuse. The Q&A session provided a platform for the students to make their questions and concerns heard and get the “real facts.”



Charmaine Yoest, Ph.D.

Associate Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy
Executive Office of the President

Ms. Yoest greeted the students with news and updates on prevention efforts from The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. She made the students aware of the serious national opioid crisis that the U.S. is facing today and congratulated the students for already being part of a movement in preventing more citizens falling victim to this unprecedented epidemic.



Mary Winnefeld

Parent Guest Speaker, S.A.F.E Project US

Ms. Winnefeld lost her 19-year old son Jonathan to a tragic accidental opioid overdose in September 2017. She shared her heartbreaking story from a parent's perspective, and helped the students become aware of how their decisions affect not only themselves but also their families, friends and the entire community.

Ms. Winnefeld is the Co-Founder and Co-Chair of S.A.F.E. Project US (Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic), a national nonprofit working through a disciplined, collaborative, multi-pronged and non-partisan approach to end the nation's catastrophic opioid epidemic.



Karin Jordås

Secretary General, Mentor International

Ms. Jordås spoke about the work that Mentor is doing internationally and especially addressed how impressed she was of the students' interest and interaction during the day. She also talked about how Sweden is considered one of the leading countries in prevention and how she believes in this generation's ability to make healthier life choices.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW



IQ CHALLENGE PRE- & POST ASSESSMENT

Students participated in a pre-and-post IQ challenge where they were tested on their knowledge about the brain and drug and substance misuse using an interactive polling system that allowed live projections of their answers to each question. The questions were based on Dr. Ruben Baler's presentation (NIDA) where we would be able to track the students' learnings at the end of the day.



YOUTH FORUM & POETRY SLAM WORKSHOP

During the Youth Forum students were challenged to ask their own questions about drug and substance misuse in an effort to help "shatter the myths" that often surround them. The forum included discussions from both a scientific and social perspective.

After being intellectually and emotionally stimulated through a variety of topics relating to drug and substance misuse, a Poetry Slam Workshop was led by the Poetry group 'Split this Rock'. The students later that day shared their inner thoughts and feelings around addiction and the importance of prevention.

Amazing poetry was created and shared amongst their peers and the concept was again proven, that in focusing on the innate talents and strengths that young people already have, they become their biggest advocates for staying drug-free.

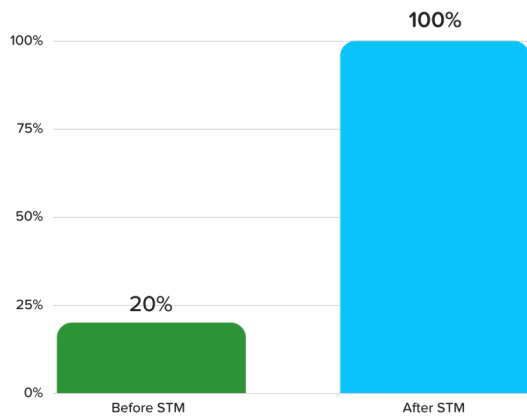


YOUTH PLEDGE

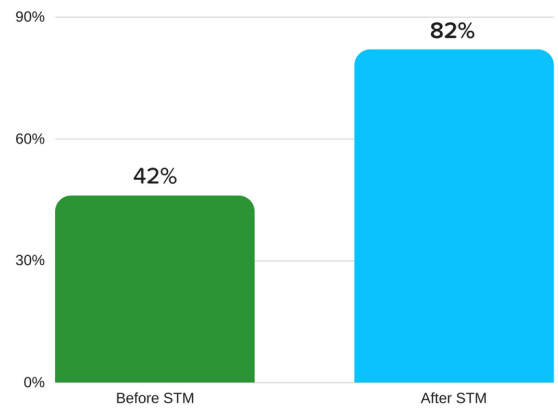
The day ended with a youth pledge led by our guest DJ Brenden Hill from the Washington Wizards, inspiring the students to take charge of their own destiny and strive towards making healthy life choices.



OUTCOMES OF THE DAY



100% of students gained in-depth knowledge of the biological function of the brain as it pertains to decision-making and risky behaviors.



82% of students showed an understanding of how genes and environmental factors play a significant role in the structure of the adolescent brain.

Positive Changes in Student Learnings

Mentor Foundation USA know that “peer to peer” messages are our most powerful tools in prevention, which is why we direct our efforts during the ‘Shatter the Myths’ program to uncover the voices of our youth. We also tailor each program component to ensure that students leave with enough information and inspiration to spread the message further within their own communities. This “ripple effect” allow us to extend the reach of our program, making positive changes in families and communities around the U.S.

An important component of this program is the pre-and-post assessment that help us understand and measure the effectiveness and impact the program has on the students. Several years of data collection from this program clearly shows a positive change in student’s perception, attitude and knowledge towards drugs. Furthermore, the data also proves just how impactful and important education is. The majority of students change their overall perception and attitude towards the dangers and social impact of drug and substance misuse.

Mentor Foundation USA is an affiliate of Mentor International, founded in 1994 by Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden and the World Health Organization, Mentor is the leading non-governmental organization working globally to prevent drug misuse. Mentor International has a global mission to prevent youth from falling susceptible to substance misuse. As an advocate for prevention, Mentor identifies, implements and shares information regarding best practices. In the United States we work jointly with scientists and agencies, in addition to the business community, to inform various groups and communities about trends and other factors that lead to substance misuse.

Mentor is now represented in the USA, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Germany, the UK, and has regional offices in Lebanon serving 22 Arab countries. Collectively, Mentor has implemented projects in over 80 countries impacting more than 6 million youth.

A Special Thank You to our Supporting Partners



TESTIMONIALS



This really helped me more to understand “The software” that goes on in my brain and how drugs and alcohol can affect that.



Eliza Jones
Student, Field High School



The most informative fun I've had in a while.



Keaton Anderson
Student, Field High School



Events like ‘Shatter the Myths’ are unique and precious opportunities to empower young people. Few goals are more important than giving kids fact-based insights into their behaviors and the many things that can threaten their well-being.

Dr. Ruben Baler

Scientist on the Neurobiology of Drug Abuse & Addiction,
National Institute on Drug Abuse



I was extremely motivated and completely blown away at the students' involvement in preventing the opioid crisis from spreading among our D.C. youths. The event married together scientific evidence, heart wrenching stories of tragedy, and allowed the attendees to speak from their heart in an artistic way. I am personally committed to play my part in preventing this epidemic and Securitas is proud to be a partner in this fight.

Andrew Dunn, President
Securitas USA
Mobile Guarding Division
North America



Second Genesis Foundation decided to support the ‘Shatter the Myths’ youth rally because we believe that investing time and resources in education and prevention is an important part of our mission as a foundation.

Ross Little
Chairman
Second Genesis Foundation



The spirit and engagement among the students was inspirational, and a testament to the structure of the program. I and the rest of the S.A.F.E. team would welcome the opportunity to participate in future years, and offer onsite support for students with personal connections and struggles related to substance abuse and addiction.

Mary Winnefeld
Parent Guest Speaker
S.A.F.E Project US

