

'SAY NO' MESSAGE SPREADS ANTI-DRUG CAMPAIGN TAKES MANY AVENUES

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- Author/Byline: RANDY LOFTIS Herald Staff Writer
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Red ribbons, symbols of an anti-drug campaign across Florida, are appearing around arms, radio antennae, light poles, trees, the Goodyear blimp and politicians in Palm Beach County.

Today marks the midpoint of Red Ribbon Week, proclaimed by Gov. Bob Martinez and organized by community activists to promote the idea that children can "just say no" to drugs.

Lake Worth Mayor Ralph Schenck is tying red ribbons at City Hall. Anti-drug clowns from the Telephone Pioneers group handed out ribbons to county commissioners at their meeting Tuesday. Cars are sporting stickers and ribbons, while school children are wearing T-shirts and buttons.

As children at Boca Raton's Shadowood Square Shopping Center sign anti-drug pledges and others at schools across the county celebrate the effort in different ways, drug-abuse counselors are hoping the message is clear.

"We're just out there telling all the kids that we love them and they can say no," said Mary Evelyn, business manager at Growing Together, a nonprofit drug and alcohol treatment center that opened May 6 in Lake Worth.

The existence of Growing Together and other treatment facilities for young people shows the need for the campaign, workers say.

Opening with 25 Palm Beach County children who had been in a similar program in Sarasota, the center already has had two or three new admissions, Evelyn said. The center treats 12-year-old children to 22-year-old adults.

"The idea we're talking about is the fact that we need drug rehabilitation programs for those kids who couldn't say no to drugs," Evelyn said. "People are finding out it doesn't just happen to the other kid. It's happening in our own homes."

Red Ribbon events have been taking place across the county and will continue through the week.

* The Goodyear blimp started displaying the "Just Say No" slogan over South Florida Tuesday.

* Children will rally against drugs at 8:30 a.m. today at Seaview Park in Palm Beach.

* A 5:30 p.m. jazzercise demonstration at North Palm Beach's Osborne Park and a 7:30 p.m. presentation of the play The Addict at St. Andrews School in Boca Raton round out today's activities.

* At Mission Bay, the aquatic complex in Boca Raton, fifth- grade students will take part in an anti-drug rally at noon Friday.

* And starting Friday, children can sign anti-drug pledges at Boca Raton's Shadowood Square. The pledge drive runs through May 23.

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