



News Release

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WORKSHOP AT WESTERN ADDRESSES HEALTHY CHOICES

St. Joseph, Mo. —Aug. 4, 2006—Dr. Evelyn Brooks has made healthy babies her mission. In the past two years, the professor of nursing at Missouri Western State University has received three grants from the March of Dimes totaling more than \$40,000 to promote healthy choices and prenatal care. Her most recent grant of approximately \$25,000 is funding a free workshop for northwest Missouri high school teachers, nurses and counselors Aug. 11 and 12.

The workshop, “An Ounce of Prevention,” addresses preventing birth defects, alcohol, drug and tobacco use, and making healthy choices. It includes a curriculum package worth \$80, teaching tips for individual instruction, hand-outs, and breakfast and lunch both days. The workshop will be taught by the writers of the curriculum, Brenda Bell from the University of Missouri, Columbia, and Lori Williamson-Kruse from the Children’s Hospital of Oklahoma. To date, high schools in 14 of the 17 counties targeted in northwest Missouri will be represented at the workshop.

Dr. Brooks noted that the “An Ounce of Prevention” curriculum aligns with the National Standards for Family and Consumer Science and meets the Missouri competency requirements, Show-Me Standards, and Science and Health Framework Standards.

As part of the program, Western senior nursing students and health, physical education and recreation department majors will be paired with 67 high schools in the 17 counties, and they will travel to their assigned school this fall to teach one of the units of the “An Ounce of Prevention” curriculum.

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Leslie Balcazar, who graduated from Western in May with a bachelor of science in nursing, assisted Dr. Brooks with the workshop planning, personally contacting teachers, nurses and counselors in the 67 high schools. “I’m very excited about the workshop. It is vital that nursing students get out and touch the community and educate them.”

“The goal of our nursing program is to help students become leaders in developing healthier communities,” said Dr. Brooks. “And that is exactly what this does.”

Two years ago, a \$15,000 grant to the nursing department provided funding for nursing students to develop a presentation on preventing birth defects and making healthy choices for 1,500 adolescent girls in the St. Joseph high schools. Because of that program’s success, the March of Dimes encouraged Dr. Brooks to apply for a grant to reach a larger audience. She decided a workshop for high school teachers, nurses and counselors in northwest Missouri could have a greater impact, since there is a potential to reach more than 14,000 students.

The nursing department also received a \$480 grant to develop a web site of resources for area teenagers, and a Western professor and student translated the site into Spanish as well.

Dr. Brooks hopes the programs funded by the grants will result in healthier babies. Between 2000 and 2004, there was an average of 7.7 infant deaths per 1,000 births in the state, and 8,747 births in Missouri were to teenagers aged 15 to 19. She said this workshop will help adolescents, as well as health educators, understand the importance of risk and protective measures available to prevent birth defects.

“It’s exciting that we are going out into the community; we’re not waiting for them to come to us,” Balcazar said. “We’re teaching about health care and healthy choices.”

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Missouri Western State University is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The university offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.

