

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### Students Participate in the 6th Annual "Rally for Awareness"

Talladega, AL—Students from across Alabama were among more than 500 participants from across the state who met at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega on April 23, 2009, for the 6th Annual "Rally for Awareness".

The "Rally for Awareness" was a collaboration of the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Focus Program, Advanced Imaging of Gadsden, and Family Links of Calhoun County. The host school for this year's Rally was Jacksonville High School. Focus Program schools were invited to send student leaders for a day of education and prevention activities for the reduction of adolescent risk behaviors.

Pete Key from Florence, Alabama, known as the "Ole Pete Key, Inc", was the keynote speaker for the Rally. Ole Pete Key, Inc's web site [www.olepetekeyinc.com](http://www.olepetekeyinc.com) illustrates the effectiveness of his presentations with students. Mr. Key used music and drama to encourage students to make good decisions which will impact their future.

Tom Robertson, HIV Prevention Coordinator, Alabama Department of Public Health Area 6, spoke openly and honestly with the participants and stressed the importance of postponing risk behaviors which lead to infection.

Student break-out sessions provided information on topics such as Tobacco Prevention, Driving through the Eyes of Teens, Healthy Teen Dating Relationships, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, HIV/AIDS Prevention and Testing, Sexting, Sexually Transmitted Infections and other risky behaviors. Oxford High School encouraged other students to become involved in student-led prevention through implementation of the Focus Program. The student breakout sessions were led by students from Auburn High School, Benjamin Russell High School, Hewitt-Trussville High School, Sylacauga High School, Jacksonville High School, Jacksonville State University Peer Educators, and the Alabama Department of Public Health. Numerous community based organizations were involved in a Health and Wellness Fair.

Sue Jones, Statewide Director of the Focus Program, stated, "The Rally for Awareness is an event which promotes positive youth development and provides students the opportunity to gain leadership skills to implement prevention activities in their respective schools. We would like to thank Citizens Baptist Medical Center, HONDA Manufacturing of Alabama, and Advanced Imaging of Gadsden for their past financial support of the Rally." For more information on the Focus Program, please visit [www.thefocusprogram.com](http://www.thefocusprogram.com).