

**MAKING an IMPACT**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Annual “Rally for Awareness”**

TALLADEGA, AL – Students from fourteen counties were among the 340 students who recently attended the Focus Program’s “Rally for Awareness” held at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center on April 29, 2010. The Rally focused on the prevention of adolescent risk behaviors identified by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

The Rally was featured on Birmingham’s WBRC FOX 6 Health Segments and included a keynote address by Jeh Jeh Pruitt, motivational speaker and WBRC Fox 6 News Anchor. During his presentation, Mr. Pruitt, whose message was Childhood Obesity Prevention, recognized West Blockton and George Washington Carver Elementary Schools, winners of the Scale Back Alabama competition sponsored by the Alabama Department of Public Health. He also announced the winner of the FOCUS Program Public Service Announcement competition addressing Childhood Obesity. The winner of \$500.00, donated by Leslie Patton & Associates of Birmingham, was Benjamin Russell High School. Congratulations to all three winners!

Rally participants also attended breakout sessions related to issues concerning young people. Among them were presentations by the following area high schools: Calhoun County Career Technical Center, Jacksonville, Hewitt Trussville, Sylacauga, and Ider High Schools. The Montgomery Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Jacksonville State University Peer Educators, and a Health Fair, featuring twenty state and community agencies, were also an important part of the prevention activities.

Teachers and other adults attending the Rally participated in breakout sessions where Christina Kilgore, Chief Deputy for Talladega County District Attorney’s Office, presented on Internet Safety and Cyber Crime 101. Participants also heard an outstanding presentation from Elana M. Parker, Health Services Administrator II for the Office of Minority Health and Office of Women’s Health at the Alabama Department of Public Health, on the topic of Women’s Health: Infant Mortality and Teen Pregnancy.

In the closing session, Kamaria Gammon presented a powerful message to the participants on “Living with HIV”. Tom Robertson, Alabama Department of Public Health, HIV/AIDS Prevention Coordinator, Area 6, challenged the students and teachers to share the information they learned at the Rally with others in their schools and communities.

The Rally was part of the Focus Program’s statewide effort to promote student-led prevention of adolescent risk behaviors. Sue Jones, Statewide Director, stated, “The Rally provides an opportunity for students to become more knowledgeable on health issues that impact academic achievement, goals, and wellness”.