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Speaker also talks with Junction City students

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Putting a comical twist on talking to teens about sexual assault, Mike Domitrz, founder and executive director, The Date Safe Project, spoke to more than 1,000 teens in five area schools April 20 and 21.

photograph by

Domitrz uses the “Can I Kiss You?” approach when talking to students about what sexual assault is, how to avoid situations and what to do if a person finds his or herself in a situation.

“Mike uses humor and ‘teen language’ to provide a fun, interactive learning experience using role playing and interaction with the audience,” said Lt. Col. Christine Pacheco, Equal Opportunity Program Manager, Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division. “He teaches about asking first through verbal consent, group intervention and how to support survivors. He does not ‘lecture,’ instead, they are having a thoughtful conversation on a subject they care deeply about.”

Teaching teens about sexual assault is important because it directly affects them, Domitrz said.

“Every high school has survivors of sexual assault,” he said. “Each survivor should know his or her options. Plus, all of us should be helping those we love to be able to come forward after an assault to seek proper support.”

Teenagers are considered to be in a high-risk category, he said.

“It is important to teach teens about sexual assault because the highest category of victims is from the ages of 13 to 17 nationally,” Pacheco said. “If we teach teens at an early age to recognize a potential sexual assault and give them skills on intervening, we might be able to reduce the amount of reports in this age category.”

With Domitrz’ expertise and experience with helping teens and parents around the world, he

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is able provide specific skills in an entertaining and engaging manner that most schools simply don't have access to, Pacheco said.

"He teaches skills for intervening and being a friend," she said.

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"It provides information on where teens can go for help and how they can help if they know someone who has been a victim.

It also provides good information on healthy relationships, dating and intimacy on a level they can understand and appreciate."

On April 20, Domitrz visited with freshmen students at Junction City High School's Freshmen Success Academy.

"It's important to learn about sexual assault because it happens every day," said Matthew Champagne, freshman, JCHS FSA. "Knowing more about this can help everyone know how it affects our own lives and how we can prevent it from ever happening."

Champagne said he learned "that one act, such as intervening when some guy is trying to take advantage of a girl, can help both the girl and you."

Freshman Rachel Schmiede said she learned that when dating and in a bad situation, "you need to get out because you are better than that."

Domitrz said students, parents and school officials believe the "Can I Kiss You?" approach is powerful and effective because "we are one of the few resources which actually give male and female teenagers specific skills and strategies to handling various situations they can find themselves in with a partner, whether dating, hooking up or at a party."

"Students want to make the right choices. Many adults simply fail to give them the proper methods to making those decisions, and many parents do not know how to effectively have such needed conversations," he said.

FSA English teacher Kendra Feuerbacher said Domitrz' presentation had a great message

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about self confidence and right versus wrong that she said she feels appeals to students, especially teenagers.

“Freshmen really need to know that physical intimacy is not the pathway to love, and that it is important to stand up in defense of those around us, especially when it comes to sexual assault cases,” Feuerbacher said. “A small step at the beginning of a relationship, such as asking, ‘Can I kiss you?’ can prevent the misinterpretation of signals that could lead to major consequences.”

Following a presentation in a local school, two students asked Domitrz to sign the back of their cell phone because they said, “this was the best presentation we’ve ever heard in high school.”

“To have two teens that were excited about a program on dating and sexual assault is inspiring,” Pacheco said.

For more information on Domitrz’ “Can I Kiss You?” approach to sexual assault, visit www.datesafeproject.org.

By Shandi Dix
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Shandi Dix | POST

Freshmen students at Junction City High School’s Freshman Success Academy role play April 20 during a sexual assault training event given by Mike Domitrz, founder and executive director, The Date Safe Project.
