

DERRY NEWS

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'This is Your Life'

And it's time to stay healthy

Hood middle-schoolers taught safe ways to eat right and be fit

By Julie Huss
LEISLY NEWS STAFF

BARBIE VISITED Gilbert H. Hood Middle School in a big way Thursday and helped teach middle-schoolers about positive self-image, esteem and healthy eating habits.

Although Barbie's more-than-perfect figure is considered by many to be the ideal female shape, the life-sized doll came to school to help the students realize that being healthy and fit doesn't have to be a 16-inch waist.

The presentation, "This is Your Life!" brought an exciting message to Hood through the use of live theater, props and some fun comedy skits, all aimed at teaching the importance of eating right, nutrition and how to steer clear of bad influences that the outside media world sometimes glorifies.

The assembly was presented to groups of sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. Two enthusiastic performers — Julie Perkins and Mike Dorval — took the students on a journey through osteoporosis, exercise, good food

choices and how to maintain a positive attitude and outlook on their body types and sizes.

The show began with some staggering statistics on the bone disease osteoporosis, and how young teens can fall victims to its degeneration and affects due to bad eating habits and lack of exercise. Teens who choose to diet can suffer, and those who take the extreme approach and lose too much weight can become anorexic and lose valuable bone mass at an early age.

"Habits start now," said Julie, who

showed the audience a photo of a 16-year-old girl who insisted on being rail thin and was suffering from serious osteoporosis. The girl in the photo weighed only 90 pounds, far less than a girl of her age and height should weigh. The consequences of her desire to be thin had wreaked havoc on her young body, Julie said, and she now had lost 24 percent of her bone density due to dieting and starving herself to be thin.

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Mike Dorval (left) and Julie Perkins brought a very important lesson to middle-schoolers at Gilbert H. Hood School last week. The two performers presented "This is Your Life!" and stressed the importance of eating healthy, exercise and having a positive body image.

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'This is Your Life' on stage

■ HOOD

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When Mike brought out his "visual" for the day — the Barbie doll, then the life-size Barbie — students chuckled and laughed, but the message was sent loud and clear from the stage that trying to look like this doll was very unrealistic. With television, magazines and advertisements telling the world that it's cool to be thin, many teens fall prey to these influences and can do serious harm to their bodies, Julie said.

She added only two percent of American women are biologically able to have a shape like Barbie and already two-thirds of fourth-

grade girls in this country have already been on a diet. Julie told the students that bodies need to grow and develop naturally at this young age.

"This is Your Life!" has received rave reviews and was created by Emmy Award-winning nutritionist and director of FOOD-PLAY Productions Barbara Storper, M.S., R.D., and co-written by Paul Wagner, Emmy Award-winning actor/writer and host of WLVI-TV's "Kid's Club."

Hood Assistant Principal Lorie McEwen told the students after the assembly to play it safe with their health and eating habits and be proud of who they are and how different everybody is. She

urged anyone who might know of someone with an eating problem or any other concerns or questions to seek out help at the school through teachers or counselors.

"There are people out there, people at school and people you know who say 'that is what I should look like,'" said McEwen. "We should all look different, look like ourselves and be as healthy as you can."

The performances at Hood were sponsored by the Gilbert H. Hood PTSA, the Gender Equity Committee at Hood and through a grant from the Alexander Eastman Foundation and the Derry School Food Service.