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Dramatic performance addresses social issues

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Susie Vanderlip - **Special to the Citizen-Times**

ASHLEY WILSON • AWILSON@CITIZEN-TIMES.COM • PUBLISHED MAY 5, 2009 12:15 AM

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HENDERSONVILLE – A Mill Spring drug and alcohol addiction treatment center hopes to reach Western North Carolina youths through a theatrical performance.

NOTICE TO ASHEVILLE CHILDREN'S MEDICAL CENTER PATIENTS

A decision has been made to separate our practice. The Skyland office will be the location of Blue Sky Pediatrics (a new practice) with Dr. Kowa and Dr. Preston. The Biltmore location will continue as Asheville Children's Medical Center with Dr. Bryan, Dr. Fogleman, Dr. Grant and Kelly Klaaren, PA.

If you have any questions, feel free to call either of the offices, (Biltmore Office, 828-258-0969 or Skyland Office, 828-687-8709). Your children will continue to receive top-quality care at either of these offices.

Pavillon, a nonprofit residential and outpatient center that provides support to alcoholics, drug addicts and their families, is bringing Legacy of Hope at 7-8:30 tonight at West Henderson High. The event is free and open to the public.

The dramatic one-woman show combines dance, acting and personal stories to address drinking, drug abuse, depression, suicide, self-esteem, teen pregnancy and violence among other social issues.

"It addresses many of the things to which these children are faced with," said Joanne Young, director of the children's program at Pavillon. "This is a program that we hope will educate not only the kids, but the parents as well and give them some understanding of what the kids go through."

Young works with children of addicts. She helps them understand that their parent's addiction is not their fault, and while it can be treated and controlled, it cannot be cured.

She also helps children deal with negative feelings, boost their self-esteem and learn how to set goals. She hopes that Legacy of Hope's unique and in-your-face approach can reach some youth in ways other programs haven't been able to.

In addition to the night performance, students at West Henderson High will also get to view Legacy of Hope during the school day.

For 17 years, Susie Vanderlip has been performing Legacy of Hope at schools, churches, universities, conferences and juvenile detention centers. She has performed in 47 states for one million teens and adults. She has also seen first hand how alcoholism and addiction can damage a family.

"She doesn't just stand there and talk and lecture, which so many people do," Young said. "The dramatic presentation that is done during the program grabs people at a very gut level. It's very emotional." Young warned that the program might not be appropriate for children elementary age and younger.

During her performance, Vanderlip transforms herself into various characters, including a gang banger, an abused woman, a promiscuous teen, a pregnant teen, an alcoholic and a daughter of an alcoholic father. All the characters are based on real people Vanderlip knows.

Everyone in the audience, she said, can identify with or knows someone like one of her characters. A dancer for 35 years, Vanderlip also incorporates modern, hip-hop and jazz dancing into her performance.



IF YOU GO

Pavillon will present Legacy of Hope at 7 tonight at West Henderson High, 3600 Haywood Road, Hendersonville.

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At the end of the performance, Vanderlip turns into herself and helps the audience process what they have just seen. She hopes to give youths the wisdom to learn how to deal with their emotions constructively and teach parents how to effectively communicate with their children, she said.

"A lot of these characters are people who turn to alcohol and drugs, violence against others," she said. "They are really trying to cope with their feelings. What I am really trying to do is educate them with emotional wisdom. How do you deal with what you are feeling?"



Call Ashley at 828-232-5856 or e-mail AWilson@CITIZEN-TIMES.com.

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