

## Girl Talk focuses on healthy living

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Kennetcook- As the school year comes to a close, a few grade 12 and grade 9 girls from Hants North Rural High reviewed their successes this year.

The grade 12 girls were part of Girl Talk, a program where senior high girls in grades 11 and 12 mentor the grade 7 girls, encouraging discussion around the issues that face students as they leave behind the shelter of elementary and move into the often scary and confusing world of Junior High. This is the second year for the group of seven girls; Marlee Smith, Brianna MacNeil, Cassie Fahey, Shanda White, Miranda Dearman, Breanna Cox and Chelsea White, who took the training for the program with Krista Piek of Public Health.

This year the younger girls were focussed on healthy eating, healthy relationships and body image and showed special interest how certain media gives the wrong message about how you should look. They refer to the Dove commercial that shows how an average, attractive girl can be altered though heavy makeup, hair styles and finally Photoshop to become a super model. In one of the exercises, the girls were asked to find the 'fakes' in a magazine and sadly only one was not fake. They even commented on how even the food is

made to look perfect in comparison to its reality.

The Girl Talk program has evolved over the last six years since its beginning, when this particular group of girls were in grade 7 themselves. All admitted that they were unaware these were fake images when they were just starting out but that this year's group of grade 7's seemed to be more aware. They were also impressed with the discussions and participation by all.

This program received funding from the Colchester-East Hants Community Health Board. The girls wrote the grant and received \$500 to use toward healthy lunches and snacks. The students were able to bring in a Zumba instructor, and purchased plain white T-shirts for the girls to paint empowering messages on and each girl received a certificate of participation.

Many of these girls are also involved in a group called Girl's Leadership that continues to encourage good self esteem and positive images throughout junior high. Guidance Councillor Maureen Woodard, who works closely with the groups, commented on the dedication of the senior girls, they gave a lot of their time, missing a few classes and worked hard to keep up in the work. All of the seven will be graduating this year, leaving space for a new group of girls to begin mentoring.

Techsploration was another excellent program at HNRH this year. It is a program designed for girls in grade 9 to explore and be exposed to non traditional roles in the areas of trades and science. It is a program to which you have to apply at the school by writing an essay detailing why you would like to be in the program. The chosen girls are then assigned a mentor who works in a non-traditional field and have opportunities through other Techsploration events to view other careers. This year's mentor was Dr, Melissa Grey, Curator of Paleontology at the Joggins Fossil Centre.

This year's Techsploration students were Cassie Postma, Megan White, Melissa Boudreau, Kerri-Anne Durling, Kelsey Sutton, and Brooke Laffin. Several of the girls already had careers in mind before they entered the program, but wanted to explore all the options available. They agreed they were surprised at the number of options available and all agreed that while Paleontology looked fun, it was not a career option for them.

Durling had been considering entering an arts program, but after Techsploration, has decided to look a bit more closely at the various engineering fields or business. Laffin has changed her mind about her first possibilities, and thinks she might like to work on cars. The program broadens the career horizons for these youth and opens doors to options they may not have been aware existed. Sutton says that while she was considering architecture, she wanted to look at similar fields that might interest her, and had an opportunity to meet and speak with an architect through this program.

Both Postma and White both believe the program is an excellent opportunity for young girls and encourage girls in grade 8 to consider applying to participate. White was not sure at first she wanted to do it, but after she became involved, was glad she had not missed the opportunity.

To parents White says, "Get girls into it as much as possible."

Techsploration is a not for profit organization and a joint enterprise between The Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), Women in Trades and Technology Nova Scotia (WITT NS), and the apprenticeship training and Skill Development Division of the NS Department of Labour and Advanced Education. The purpose is to encourage young women from diverse backgrounds to explore a wide range of career options in the fields of Science, Trades and Technology and therefore increase the number of women working in those fields.

Hants North is the only school in the Chignecto Central Regional School Board's Nova Family of Schools to offer this program. In November of 2012, all previous participants who are now in grades 10, 11, and 12 will be able to attend the alumni conference at the NSCC Akerley Campus in Dartmouth. It is another opportunity for these youth to learn more about in demand careers they may not have thought about or know about.