

## Lifeskills and SADD students start programs



5 HOURS AGO • [COLLEEN BRUNNER BUTTE COUNTY POST CORRESPONDENT](#)

NEWELL | The LifeSkills class at the Newell school district, which is taught by Whatever It Takes Coalition Director Sabrina Harmon, will hold its first weekly class on Aug. 29.

Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST) is a research-validated substance abuse prevention program proven to reduce the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse, and violence by targeting the major

social and psychological factors that promote the initiation of substance use and other risky behaviors. This comprehensive and exciting program provides adolescents and young teens with the confidence and skills necessary to successfully handle challenging situations.

Developed by Dr. Gilbert J. Botvin, a leading prevention expert, Botvin LifeSkills Training is backed by over 30 scientific studies and is recognized as a Model or Exemplary program by an array of government agencies including the U.S. Department of Education and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

Rather than merely teaching information about the dangers of drug abuse, Botvin LifeSkills Training promotes healthy alternatives to risky behavior through activities designed to: Teach students the necessary skills to resist social (peer) pressures to smoke, drink and use drugs; help students to develop greater self-esteem and self-confidence; enable students to effectively cope with anxiety; increase their knowledge of the immediate consequences of substance abuse; and enhance cognitive and behavioral competency to reduce and prevent a variety of health risk behaviors.

"Through a Prevention Funding Grant with the State of South Dakota, the WIT Coalition is able to bring the Lifeskills curriculum into the sixth through 11th grade classrooms each week," said Harmon. The Coalition, which meets monthly, has received Prevention Accreditation Certification from the South Dakota Department of Social Services for an additional two years, through March 31, 2015, by meeting the state's accreditation requirements.

DSS Prevention Program Specialist, George Summerside, commended the W.I.T. Coalition.

"It is apparent that the WIT Coalition is dedicated to providing effective prevention services and you are committed to making your community a safer, healthier environment for the young adults of Newell and the surrounding area. Your use of evidence-based programming will certainly help you reach your goals," said Summerside.

The WIT Coalition also helps to sponsor the Newell Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Team and Harmon said she is creating a middle school group as well as the current

high school group that is continuing to provide information to the school and community.

"Don't sacrifice a good life for a good time," is the SADD motto and each member has to sign a contract of terms to be a part of the organization. Harmon is the advisor for the groups.

"The Newell SADD Team is an inclusive group and not an exclusive one," said Harmon. "Not only is SADD an organization for youth who choose not to involve themselves in destructive behaviors, but for youth who have found themselves engaged in those behaviors in the past, but use SADD as a way to help them to stay on track for the future."

Harmon said it doesn't matter if students have failed in the past, the group cares about where that student is today and the next day and the next. She said it is a very forgiving group.

That said, however, Harmon also said the group challenges themselves to uphold the SADD image in the school and community and that a basic no-use doctrine is at the very heart of everything they do.

You can find out more information about Lifeskills at <http://www.lifeskillstraining.com/index.php>, and more info on the SADD organization at <http://sadd.org>. You can learn more information about the WIT Coalition by contacting Harmon at [Sabrina.harmon@kwe.sd.us](mailto:Sabrina.harmon@kwe.sd.us) or by phone at 605-381-9136. There are no membership fees and the group is always excited about new people bringing new ideas to the table.