

Thank you for allowing me to share information with you this afternoon.

I have been with RUC for about 9 years and have seen firsthand the impact SRA education has on the lives of the students of Ohio.

One of the topics we discuss with students is the dangers of human trafficking and the warning signs of a potentially dangerous relationship. In this discussion, we teach the students how to recognize someone who genuinely loves them versus someone who is making false promises.

When I asked a class of 25, 7th grade students. “What is love?” One boy raised his hand and said, “None of us know. All of our parents are divorced.”

You might say that our biggest concern right now is mental health – to which I would respond that pediatric research has found relationships problems were the most common precipitating circumstance observed in both childhood and early adolescent suicide. In addition, we know that teaching interpersonal problem solving skills in schools is an effective prevention strategy when it comes to mental health concerns.

Relationships Under Construction targets interpersonal problem solving skills in schools, right now, today. We are currently meeting this need.

A comment I have received from a student after our program confirms how we help.

“I learned how to have a healthy relationship and know how I should be treated. I learned how to be loved, and a lot of people don’t know what love is.”

More recently after teaching the teen pregnancy lesson to a group of 8th grade students in Bucyrus Ohio, I had a young girl share with me that all men leave. Her dad left her, her uncle left her, her grandpa left her grandma whom she was currently living with. Every relationship example in her life, ended with a man walking away. And I thought how could I stand in front of

her and tell her life could be different? I had the luxury of growing up with both my parents in a safe home. But the truth is that my life experience does not change her truth or mine. The truth remains the same, that children who grow up with both parents are happier, healthy and more successful and how dare we tell them anything other than the truth- no matter what is happening in the world. We have a responsibility to be honest. They deserve to know how to change their situation and how to achieve success in all areas of their development. They deserve to have access to the steps of life success sequencing which has been proven to be true. You have the opportunity to be a part of the solution, by allocating funding to our program.

That day, in that Bucyrus city classroom, I had the privilege of telling that one 8th grade girl, that while 80% of men who father a teen pregnancy do leave, not all men leave. It was my job to tell her that there are good men left in this world. And there can be more if we prioritize it.

I will leave you with one last comment from a student that helps us understand the depth of what we do. She said, “You made me really realize my self-worth and my responsibilities. Thank you”