

(Anchor Intro)

Theatre can entertain, but also deliver strong messages about important issues.

That's what some Tennessee 4-Hers are doing as part of an acting troupe – performing skits about drug abuse, bullying and sexting.

As Charles Denney reports, these young actors don't shy away from difficult topics.

TRT 2:26

Springfield Middle School :01 - :10
Robertson County

Marissa Pryor :38 - :48
4-H Acting For Life

Charles Denney :49 - :59
UT Institute of Agriculture

Austin Wimberly 1:22 – 1:29
4-H Acting For Life

Kathy Finley 1:30 – 1:36 (also 1:54 – 2:04)
UT Extension – Robertson County

Take Pkg -----

“How does marijuana affect the brain? Learning! Learning is right.”

It's not your typical game of Family Feud.

Here survey says even casual drug use has its dangers.

These 4-Hers in Springfield aren't on a real game show, but they are on stage, part of AFL – Acting for Life.

It's a 4-H program where teens perform skits in front of their peers or younger kids about harmful behaviors -- drugs and alcohol, tobacco use, eating disorders.

(Marissa Pryor)

“We try to let the kids know it's not okay to do this stuff, and the consequences can be more severe than what anybody really thinks it could be.”

(Charles Denney)

“The younger children hear important messages from the Troupe, but the actors also benefit. Theatre teaches creativity and confidence. If you have the guts to get up on stage in front of people, you can do just about anything.”

Another gutsy thing here, the troupe isn't afraid to take on difficult subject matter.

This powerful skit was about a girl being bullied, and later belittled by her own mother.

Then she starts cutting herself and contemplates suicide.
Later actors like Austin Wimberly talk to the audience about what they've just seen.

(Austin Wimberly)

"So it's just good for them to know that we care about them and we tell them exactly what they need to know before they go off into the world."

(Kathy Finley)

"They design their skits based on the topics of what's going on right now. What's current? What's happening in their schools they want to address?"

Robertson County 4-H agent Kathy Finley has organized this program for 17 years.
She believes it's important for the skits to reflect current issues.

"Let me see that phone!"

This program included topics such as sexting.

(Kathy Finley)

"Now we do talk about relationships and sexting and cyber bullying, cutting – other kinds of issues that teens face."

The appreciative audience laughed a lot, but they also heard a number of clear messages about good and bad choices.

When you act, you get to be someone else for a while.

But sometimes pretending can deliver a deeper meaning, and real life takes center stage.

This is Charles Denney reporting.

(Anchor Tag)

The Robertson County schools and health council are also partners in this program.