



Pupils Hear Anti-Drug Message During Red Ribbon Week

*By Matt McGowan
The Morning News*

ROGERS -- Paul Vitale is smart enough to know that sixth-graders hate lectures.

"I'm not here to tell you what to do," Vitale said Monday to a gathering of 500 11- and 12-year-old Kirksey Middle School pupils. "But I will tell you that you have choices."

Vitale, a Little Rock professional speaker, visited four Benton County middle schools Monday to discuss "It's Your Life -- Dominate It," his program to empower pupils to make responsible decisions.

The tour kicked off Red

Ribbon Week, which is part of a broader, month-long effort by the Benton County Methamphetamine Task Force to increase awareness of methamphetamine use in the county.

Vitale entertained and informed pupils with anecdotes from his own experiences. He then asked pupils about school, professional aspirations and current concerns.

The future doctors, veterinarians and "governor of California" said they struggled with reading, science and art. Vitale explained that pupils aren't alone with their problems and demonstrated that there is support for children who want to say no to drugs.

Zach Venable, a sixth-grader at Kirksey said Vitale's presentation helped him understand how to make better decisions.



Paul Vitale empowers the students of Kirksey Middle School by stressing that *"It's Your Life - Dominate It"*.

Michael Zamora, The Morning News

"If someone offered me drugs, I would say 'no'," he said. "And, if it was a friend, I'd probably have to let him go."

Vitale's presentation included four principles -- *The Power of Choice, All You Have is Your Name, Perception is Reality and You Only Live Once* -- to demonstrate that pupils have choices and to help them understand how to make responsible decisions.

"When it comes to drugs and alcohol, it's up to you," Vitale said. "You are the one who has to be responsible."

Mayor Steve Womack and Rogers police officers attended the event. Vitale will speak today at Gentry and Siloam Springs middle schools.



Motivational speaker Paul Vitale of Little Rock jokes with sixth-graders Jeidy Monroy, left, Elena Lopez and Isdarely Saldana as he introduces himself to pupils in the audience. Vitale spoke on making good choices during a Red Ribbon Week assembly at Kirskey Middle School in Rogers. The red ribbon campaign encourages children across the country to make healthy choices and stay away from drugs.