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Tasty trucks to stop by Redwood for Red Ribbon Week

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By Anna Bitong

annab@theacorn.com

"Life is a journey . . . travel drug free."

That advice is being brought home to Redwood Middle School students with a series of activities during Red Ribbon Week, which began Monday

The drug awareness program this year will feature Redwood's first Red Ribbon Week Food Trucks Night fundraiser, open to the public from 5 to 8:30 p.m. tonight, Oct. 27.



Catering trucks Rock Chef Rolls, Sweet Cherrylt Yummy Treats and Sweet Arleen's, which also has a Westlake Village bake shop and whose owner is Food Network's two-time "Cupcake Wars" champion, will be parked at the school on 233 Gainsborough Road in Thousand Oaks.

The entrance fee is \$5 per family, and the trucks offer selections such as tater tots and chicken sliders, ice cream and cupcakes. Each truck will donate money to Redwood.

The goal of the event is to raise money for Red Ribbon Week activities, Abilities Awareness Week in the spring, Redwood's technology fund as well as other school programs.

"For parents to spend an evening at the school for Red Ribbon Week I think will have an impact on our kids," said Karen Thomas, who helped organize the fundraiser and whose daughter attends Redwood.

Teri Guillies, another parent at the school, coordinated the rest of the week's activities.

"I'm really proud of the school for taking this extra leap," Thomas said. "It makes me proud to know they care about our kids and are making the effort to make sure they're educated about drugs."

The week's schedule includes visits from a DARE officer and a personal trainer, each of whom will speak at an assembly, and question-and-answer sessions covering drug myths and facts. Students will also participate in games and, in keeping with the theme of making healthy choices, in a fitness boot camp.

All elementary and middle schools in the district have activities in conjunction with Red Ribbon Week.

Thomas said the availability of drugs makes her worry about her daughter's future.

"I know drugs are out there through my daughter's youth group and school. We hear rumors of kids starting at age 13, 14. It happens. We can't close our eyes to it," said Thomas, whose daughter is 13.

Principal Steve Lepire, a Los Angeles County resident, came up with the fundraising idea after seeing food trucks around L.A.

"It's something different that hasn't been done before," Lepire said. "If it works out well we could do it on a regular basis. We're very excited to see how this goes."

The principal said that it's important to provide drug education early.

"We want to be proactive. We don't want to have to be reactive. (Drugs are) always a temptation," Lepire said.

"We have to correct and modify behaviors in middle school and (teach kids) if they make a poor decision, it's not the end of the world, they can correct it. But the older they get, the harder it is to correct bad behavior formed at a younger age," he said.

Thomas agreed.

"The more they hear (about the downside of drugs), the better the future we will all have. We can take care of it now or later, and later is going to be a mess," she said.