

## For Your Information

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### **Kaiser Permanente's Live Theatre Program Helps Students and Families Make Better Decisions about Their Health and Well-Being**

Kaiser Permanente's award-winning Educational Theatre Programs inspires children, teens, and adults to make informed decisions about their health and to build stronger, healthier neighborhoods. Each of our programs shares age-appropriate, up-to-date facts necessary for making healthier life choices. Physicians, health educators, and theatre professionals at Kaiser Permanente create and continually update our programs, in collaboration with community advisory committees of educators, counselors, parents, and students. Performer/educators trained in health issues and peer counseling perform in the shows and lead all education activities. Audiences of all ages relate to the performer/educators, who reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

Our live, interactive performances are an extremely effective way of delivering health information. Programs currently touring are: ***The Best Me, PEACE Signs, Nightmare on Puberty St., Secrets, and Community Troupe.***

"Live theatre is a wonderful medium for reaching children because it captures their attention and makes the health issues real to the students," says Regina Dwerlkotte, PhD, Director of Kaiser Permanente's Educational Theatre Programs in Northern California. "Our programs not only provide positive health messages, but also facilitate ongoing dialogue between the students, their teachers, and parents long after the performance ends," says Dr. Dwerlkotte.

As a nonprofit organization and member of the community, Kaiser Permanente is dedicated to developing health education programs that will improve the lives of California's children and adults. As part of this effort, Northern California Educational Theatre Programs performed for over 360,000 young people and adults in 2008, serving over 4,000,000 people since its inception in 1986.

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**More about the productions:**

***The Best Me*** is an innovative program that helps elementary school students and their families understand the benefits of making healthier life choices. The program centers around a 45-minute live performance which uses audience participation, comedy, drama, music, and dance to promote healthy eating and active living.

*The Best Me* is available in two formats: *The Best Me* Assembly, a 45-minute show, and *The Best Me* Program, a weeklong commitment. Schools are welcome to apply for either format, however, there is much greater availability for *The Best Me* Assembly.

The performance begins as four friends complete their last year at elementary school. Together, they learn the importance of playing hard for at least 60 minutes every day, limiting screen time to no more than 2 hours a day, eating at least 5 fruits and vegetables each day, and drinking water instead of soda and juice drinks. The friends find ways to make healthy choices to become the best they can be and showcase their discoveries in an end-of-the-year performance called *The Best Me*.

***PEACE Signs*** is a comprehensive, multi-intervention program that provides students in grades 3-6 with a forum for dealing with conflict and violence. The program empowers them to “increase the peace.” *PEACE Signs* was developed to help students and adults learn to use words instead of violence when dealing with conflict. The program includes a live theatrical performance, a series of classroom workshops, and a family night performance for the families of participating students.

This interactive performance begins in a trashed playground, where four students are brought together by a caring student-teacher to help clean up the playground and paint a new mural. The students are struggling with problems ranging from bullying and peer pressure, to domestic violence and the death of a sibling. As the students work together to rebuild their playground, they learn to treat each other with respect, and develop empathy for others. They also learn how to use a 3-step “Stoplight Solution” model when faced with conflict or violent situations: stop, think, and act.

***Nightmare on Puberty St.*** uses drama, music, and humor to teach adolescents in grades 6-8 that they are not alone in facing the changes and challenges of puberty. The show follows four middle school characters on their journey through adolescence. As the characters wrestle with the quintessential adolescent question, “Am I normal?” they learn to cope with the difficult issues of self-esteem, drug and alcohol use, sexuality, depression, and peer pressure in a positive manner.

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By bringing issues of puberty to life on stage in an entertaining, engaging format, ***Nightmare on Puberty St.*** allows students to identify with the characters and empowers teachers, parents, and students to talk about critical health issues.

***Secrets*** blends drama, humor, and music into a powerful, live performance that provides the audience with facts about HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). By seeing performer/educators portray high school students in familiar situations, teen and adult audiences can identify with the realistic characters and understand the impact HIV/AIDS, and STDs can have on people's lives.

This award-winning drama follows the life of a popular high school athlete named Eddie. After engaging in some risky behavior, Eddie finds out he has contracted HIV and that his illness could have been prevented. As the play unfolds, students learn how the choices they make can have a lasting impact on their health, and the health of those they care about.

The ***Community Troupe*** program uses elements and characters from our touring productions to provide valuable health information. This program reaches young people and adults at health fairs, community gatherings, grand openings, and other special events. *Community Troupe* is designed to bring audiences important health messages through interactive shortened performances and customized programs to support the communities we serve.

Production photos are available upon request. Members of the media are invited to attend a production. Call Alicia Perales-Rangel at (510) 302-4193 for more information.

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