

## Navigating Safely Through Rough Teenage Seas Prevention Services

Let's face it, growing up's a risky operation. There was time, before vaccinations and penicillin, when parents just wanted children to live beyond diphtheria and flu. Now, families manage that. But they struggle to keep teenagers



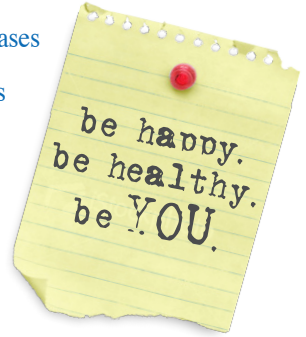
**M GEN FEST winner**

safe from the siren songs of cars, drugs, hormones, alcohol, advertising, peer pressure, and self-doubt.

Working with a range of other community organizations, RMDC's Resource Prevention Specialists—one each for Lewis & Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater Counties—are committed to helping young people weather the storms of teenage years.

Here's the idea: faced with better options, family strength, and powerful encouragement, young people make better choices about friends, their behavior, the day's activities, or life choices. In concert with Youth Connections, 4-H, Big Brothers and Sisters, school districts, and churches, the Prevention Specialists offer young people strong role models, opportunities to be creative, and skills needed to decode their world's commercial messages.

For example, RMDC's Prevention Resource Specialists help host Helena's annual M GEN FEST. The ImMEDIate GENERATION FESTIVAL showcases student-created media products (posters, video, audio) that carry student-chosen social messages: "Smoking is like putting a fork in an outlet; both are stupid; why do it." "Think Don't Drink." As students select a message and decide how to illustrate it, they figure out what makes audiences feel sad, envious, hostile, or helpful. They learn how to use the media to market positive social messages. Students build skills in the current technology, teach peers healthier concepts, and gain a little inoculation against media messages that encourage risky behavior. It's the best kind of "prevention."



**Will Michaels, L & C County Prevention Specialist**