



Photos by Luke Phillips/Atascadero News

Atascadero Police Commander Joe Allen, right, arrests a “drug addict” during the Lighthouse Reality Tour at the Colony Park Community Center Sunday. Local drama students portrayed the addict and several other parts during the tour.

# Lighthouse Reality Tour illustrates the life of an addict

By Luke Phillips  
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**ATASCADERO** — The Atascadero Lighthouse organization, in partnership with local first responders, hosted its bi-annual Reality Tour Sunday at the Colony Park Community Center.

The tour featured recreations of scenes from the life of an addict, including an arrest scene, a jail scene, an overdose scene and a funeral scene.

Long-time Atascadero educator DJ Pittenger, who now works with the county office of education, welcomed youngsters and their parents to the tour, saying that the first responders who volunteered for the tour did so as a way of dealing with the problems that they face every day in the field.

“The reason why they are here is because, like me, this is something that we are faced with and deal with every day,” she said. “Our men and women in uniform are here because this is something that they face on the



An “addict” is booked into “jail” during the reality tour.

streets in their job and they go home at night and say ‘this is a tragedy and what can we do to stop this?’ So this is an outlet for them and a way that they can get the message out in a proactive sense. Everyone is here because we’re invested in what we’re doing.”

Pittenger shared some of the results from the recent California Healthy Kids survey, which asks local students to answer questions about their drug use. Pittenger said that the results she shared were countywide and that district specific results would be available some time next

month. The survey is taken by the same group of students when they are in the 7th grade and then again when they’re in 9th grade and 11th grade.

Out of all of the 7th grade students in the county, 261 said that they had tried alcohol in the past 30 days. Two years later, the same group of students reported that 420 of them had tried alcohol in the past 30 days.

“So you can see the increase of alcohol use from 7th grade to 9th grade among youth in our county,” Pittenger said.

When asked about marijuana, 331 9th grade students said they’d tried it in the past 30 days and 423 students in the 11th grade said they’d tried it in the past 30 days. When asked about prescription pills, those numbers doubled.

For those who are interested, Pittenger says that survey results from individual districts will be available sometime in mid November and will be available on the California Department of Education’s website.