

June 9, 2016

## BRAZEN YOUTH RALLY HELPS YOUTHS LEARN THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

*Free event for youths through age 18 teaches online caution*

**Contact:**

Craig Ackerman

[Craig.Ackerman@FLHealth.gov](mailto:Craig.Ackerman@FLHealth.gov)

352-629-0137, ext. 2052



**Ocala, Fla.**—Marion County youths ages 11–18 will learn the power of social media, online safety and healthy decision-making during the 2016 BRAZEN Youth Rally 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Thursday, June 23, at Howard Middle School.

Sponsored by the Florida Department of Health in Marion County, the free event will offer music, games, contests and prizes, including the chance to win a free tablet. Lunch is free and doors open at 9:30 a.m. Howard Middle School is located at 1655 NW 10th St. in Ocala.

Using the theme, “Power of the Post, Living for the Likes,” speakers will help children and teens learn about the impact of social media and how their online presence can affect both their own lives and those around them today and in the future.

“The growing popularity of social media sites and increased access to devices connecting us to the internet has opened a world of information that no other generation has had the opportunity to access,” said Meaghan Crowley, the department’s Health Education program manager.

“However, at the same time we need to ensure that our youth understand the potential dangers and consequences that go along with it. The BRAZEN program helps teens and youths think about how their online activities can be used to have either a positive or negative influence, and give them the self-confidence to make healthy decisions and take a stand against destructive influences.”

BRAZEN is the Sexual Risk Avoidance program of the Florida Department of Health in Marion County. The program educates the community on healthy decision-making, helping to build character and self-confidence in the children and teens of Marion County.

For more information call Tracey Sapp at 352-629-0137, ext. 2284

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