

CAVE CREEK USD EXTENDS TEEN AA INTO DIVERSION PROGRAM

by Gina Durbin, Director of Student Support Services

Life Skills for a Healthier You is a five week, 1.5 hour education/diversion program through the Cave Creek Unified School District. The program is designed for families who suspect their child is drinking or doing drugs; know their child is using drugs and seeking assistance; or for students who are dealing with consequences from school or the courts for alcohol and drug related offenses.

A crucial component of the diversion program includes students attending a least 2 sessions of *Teen AA*, a 12 step teen addiction anonymous program created by teens, with teens and for teens. These group meetings are held during the school day. Our hope is that students will see how valuable a support program can be and that they will continue to attend the meetings which are held 1hour every week. The facilitator of the diversion/education program also facilitates the *Teen AA* meetings at school. The power of *Teen AA* is to have teens come together to work on the addiction challenges and support each other.

This is the first year Cactus Shadows High School offered this particular diversion program. We have had nothing but positive feedback from the students and parents who have participated in the program. All of the students who had the requirement of going through the diversion program, opted to stay in the *Teen AA* program as it has open attendance. One powerful student comment after a meeting was... "Whenever one door closes, another one opens. I am stronger than the substance is."

Our goal is to continue to have this program available through a community partner so that groups would also be available outside of the school calendar.