

Today's weather  
  
**HIGH: 81**  
**LOW: 60**  
 Sunrise: 6:37  
 Sunset: 8:15

# THE GAZETTE

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## LOCAL & ACCENT

Saturday, April 23, 2022 **B3**

### DRUG-ABUSE, SUICIDE PREVENTION

# Students honored for work at breakfast

Sara Crawford  
 The Gazette

MEDINA — For more than 30 years, the Medina County Share Cluster has collaboratively worked to promote nonviolent, drug-free living for the kids in the county.

Share Cluster is made up of individuals representing all the school districts, Medina County agencies and organizations.

As a way to celebrate the accomplishments made in the past year, Share Cluster held a breakfast Friday honoring students who have made an impact, along with individuals in the Share Cluster who have done the same.

"Each year we ask our local counselors and prevention specialists to choose two outstanding seniors who have dedicated themselves to prevention in their districts," Gayle Telford, the prevention coordinator at Buckeye Schools, said in a prefilmed video.

Telford said the chosen seniors demonstrate in their day-to-day lives that they support prevention in the community by committing to be drug-free.

As each student's name was called, they were given an award from the Share Cluster and an award from Medina County Commissioners Steve Hambley and Colleen Swedyk.

The 16 students honored at the Share Cluster breakfast have all been active within their school districts in discussing drug and alcohol prevention and many have taught younger students about the importance of remaining drug-free.

These students include:

- Jared Bradford of Black River



SARA CRAWFORD / GAZETTE PHOTOS

Contest winners stand with Devan Althen, community prevention specialist for Alternative Paths, Friday.

#### Schools

- Rachel Emmert of Black River Schools
- Kaiya Bundy of Brunswick Schools
- Jessica Biesar of Brunswick Schools
- Olivia Ortiz of Buckeye Schools
- Nicole Lawrence of Buckeye Schools
- Victoria Smith of Cloverleaf Schools
- Kevin Bittaker of Cloverleaf Schools
- Addison Towne of Highland Schools
- Ava Latham of Highland Schools
- Kaitlyn Fortuna of Medina County Career Center
- Benjamin Young of Medina County Career Center
- Morgan Metz of Medina Schools
- James Feeks IV of Medina Schools

- Hannah Wypasek of Wadsworth Schools
- Allison McCall of Wadsworth Schools

Once all the honored seniors took a seat on the stage, Young and Fortuna of MCCC gave speeches regarding drug and alcohol prevention and their life experiences.

Young is a part of the criminal justice program at MCCC, which he has said gave him a better understanding of how drugs can affect people's lives.

"Every day I wake up with a mindset that most 18-year-olds don't," Young said. "I want to be the best version of myself and I don't think introducing

myself to drugs will help me accomplish that."

Fortuna talked about how she has family members who have struggled with substance abuse.

She said that as a kid, she was unaware of the effect drugs had on her family but now has learned why some family bonds are no longer there.

"I have experienced and learned firsthand what substance abuse can do to my family and friends and this inspired me to make a difference in my school and community," Fortuna said.

In addition to the 16 seniors honored at the event, four total students

from the middle schools and high schools were awarded for their participation in Alternative Paths' two contests for suicide prevention.

At the middle school level, Alternative Paths held a poster contest where students were asked to create posters that have the warning signs of suicide, whom to reach out to and what to do if someone is in need.

In first place is Grace Huth of Cloverleaf Middle School, who created a poster she named "Stop! You Matter!"

In second place is Emma Tuberville of Claggett Middle School, with her poster named "Be Someone's Rainbow on a Rainy Day."

At the high school level, high schoolers were tasked to create stickers that will then be used by Alternative Paths as stickers, magnets and decals.

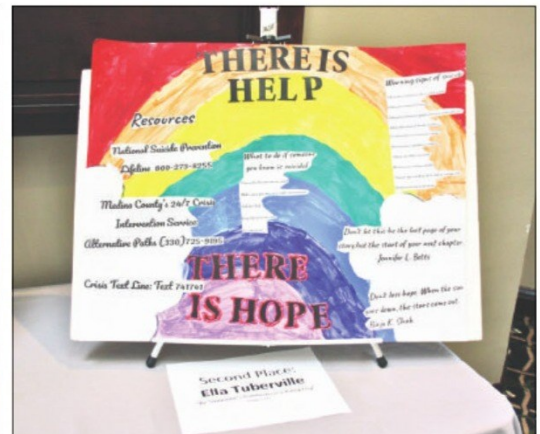
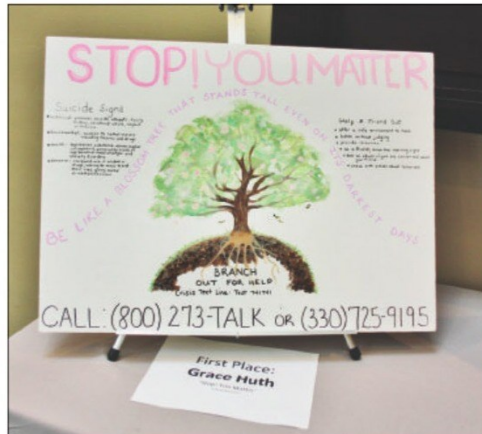
In first place is Emma Bazemore and in second is Rebekah Zarkovacki.

In past years, Alternative Paths held contests where the students would create videos for suicide prevention, but over the past years have changed that.

"What we recognized was as amazing as those videos were, we weren't really able to do much with them," said Devan Althen, community prevention specialist for Alternative Paths. "The videos were created, they were put online and then how did we get people to be able to see it?"

Now, with the posters and stickers, they will be used by Alternative Paths to talk more about suicide prevention throughout the year.

Contact reporter Sara Crawford at (330) 721-4063 or scrawford@medina-gazette.com.



LEFT: For the high school sticker contest, first place went to Emma Bazemore (top) and second went to Rebekah Zarkovacki (bottom).

MIDDLE: Grace Huth of Cloverleaf Middle School's "Stop! You Matter!" came in first place for the middle school contest.

RIGHT: Emma Tuberville of Claggett Middle School's "Be Someone's Rainbow on a Rainy Day" came in second place for the middle school contest.