

## ABSTINENCE CLEARINGHOUSE

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### **Traveling Youth Counselor Promotes Abstinence To Middle-Schoolers**

The News Enterprise By: JACOB BENNETT March 16, 2003 Would you rather be rich or famous? Drink Pepsi or Coke?

Dress like your parents or look like them? Life is all about choices, a national youth counselor told eighth-graders at Bluegrass Middle School on Friday. Jeffrey Dean spent four days last week preaching abstinence to more than 4,000 students at Hardin County, Fort Knox and Meade County schools.

Using a rapid-fire delivery that included pop culture references and jokes at authorities' expense, Dean challenged students to stay away from choices that will have negative impacts on their lives. "We're gonna talk about sex," Dean said to roaring applause.

Citing racy Taco Bell and Herbal Essence Shampoo commercials, Dean told the students that they've been sold a huge lie about choices: Everybody is having sex. He cited figures that say 54 percent of teens in 2002 were virgins, making sexually active students the minority.

Safe sex is also a lie, he said. "There is no product on the market today that can protect you 100 percent of the time from all the sexual consequences," Dean said. "At some point, something bad will happen. Mark it down."

Such consequences can be emotional as well as physical, Dean said.

He said he knew the students would make fun of his wait-until-marriage stance. He told girls there are too many dangers to their health to risk sex, and he told guys that part of being a man is respecting women.

Though some students seemed skeptical, they, for the most part, gave Dean their attention.

"I admire him for what he did and everything," Jarrett Leasor said.

"He was brave to come and talk about it." But will students take his advice?

"I think people will," Leasor said. Dean was recruited to local schools by the Crossway Pregnancy Center in Radcliff, which counsels women considering abortion and spreads an abstinence message. Dean has written teen advice books and serves on the advisory board of the National Abstinence Clearinghouse. He formed the Jeffrey Dean Co., a Nashville-based organization that tries to inspire students to pursue their goals and make wise choices throughout life. Dean answered the question he thinks most kids are afraid to ask: How far is too far?