

Connect with kids at Family Day meal

By Lillia Callum-Penso

STAFF WRITER
lpenso@greenvillenews.com

Keeping your child off drugs, in school and healthy may have a lot to do with eating dinner together.

That is the premise behind Family Day, an annual event sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse that encourages families to bring back family dinner time.

Family Day will be celebrated in Greenville and around the country on Monday.

"Sometimes it's the most simple and the most obvious that is the most overlooked and unappreciated," says Carol Reeves, chair of the Greenville Safe Communities Coalition, one of the local sponsors of Family Day. "It's a sad note when we have to have a day set in this country to notice that a family should eat together. But that's what we've become in this speedy society that we have."

In the wake of research linking regular family dinners with a child's success, the event that began in 2001 as a grass-roots initiative has become a national movement. Last year, 1,000 cities and counties took the pledge.

Dinner has become sort of a "lost art," says Reeves. More extracurricular activities, longer hours at work and a faster-paced society have pushed aside the family meal. But when you forgo dinner together, it's not just a meal that's lost, says Reeves. You lose time to catch up and to share and, most important, the time to get to know your kids.

Participating is simple, says Reeves. You can go to the Greenville Family Partnership website and take the pledge. But really, it's as simple as eating dinner with your family.

It doesn't have to be fancy or gourmet or even homemade, Reeves says. Just as long as the family dines together, the conversation isn't drowned out by television or radio or interrupted by cell phones and all parties participate.

"What they get is the time to focus on that connection to the people who are always going to be there for them, their family," Reeves says of Family Day. "You can see the look on their face, you can recognize problems, you have a better chance of getting them to communicate. You'd be surprised what they have to say."

ONLINE

For more: www.gfpdrugfree.org/community_channels/safe_communities