



BELIEVE THE HYPE!

Promoting positive choices and social norms for youth in Hancock County, Mississippi

Hancock Youth for Positive Efforts (HYPE) is an adult-guided, youth-led initiative that empowers middle and high school students to lead engaged, healthy, and positive lifestyles. A partnership with the Hancock Resource Center and the Hancock Community Coalition, HYPE continues to be a resource and platform for students and community members dedicated to promoting safe and healthy environments for our youth.

Four pillars provide a foundation for HYPE members to learn and grow upon as leaders: communication, commitment, passion, and courage. All of these attributes are key to developing well-rounded individuals who possess strong character and serve as positive ambassadors for the Hancock County community.

Each year the Hancock Community Coalition plans and hosts HYPE Leadership Day, created to help rising 6th, 7th, and 8th graders own the leader within themselves. This year the event was held at St. Clare Catholic Church on July 8th, 2020. Students were guided through activities based on the four HYPE pillars, working on solo as well as group projects to explore their impressions of Hancock County and discover the many common threads they share with their peers. An obstacle course imparted the value of teamwork and following through on a goal despite challenges posed and differences in personality. A courage activity led to discussions on the many ways bravery is shown at school or with friends and the significance of one person's willingness to speak up for themselves, as well as support others in doing what's right for them.

The first annual HYPE Recruitment Day was held on July 21st, 2020, also at St. Clare Catholic Church, expanding on topics and exercises from Leadership Day at a deeper level for rising 9th and 10th graders. A popsicle stick activity encouraged each student to share what commitment, courage, passion, and communication look like in practice and how they'd like to grow in each. Building a tower with only a few stipulations as guidelines demonstrated how innovation and partnership are vital to creating structures that hold up over time. A Hero project consisted of decorating body shapes and adding balloons that indicated what they look up to, look forward to, and work towards – celebrating what those motivations and aspirations resembled for each individual student.

Recruitment Day participants were also treated to a seminar by Dr. Raymunda Barnes, Assistant Vice President of the Hancock Campus of Pearl River Community College. Dr. Barnes spoke about ways to get involved, the many paths toward success available right here in Hancock County, and how to stand out from the crowd. Examples were given of paths that included traditional education, certifications for trades, and extracurricular involvement, with one common theme: how to serve the community as positive, committed, and active leaders.

Conversations that took place during Leadership Day and Recruitment Day centered on what it means to live and work in Hancock County, and how powerful an impact these students have on affecting positive change. Joining HYPE as an active member opens the door for opportunities to travel to conferences across the country, fulfill service hours for graduation requirements, become a face in the community, and build a niche for themselves and their peers to support one another in making good decisions.

Any student who is committed to enjoying an active role in their community, a sober middle and high school experience, and setting a positive example for their peers is a perfect candidate for HYPE! The COVID-19 pandemic called for several precautions during recent gatherings, from temperature checks to masks and limited class sizes, and similar measures will be observed as the 2020-2021 school year kicks off. However, virtual meetings and events are in the works for current HYPE students, with new members encouraged and more than welcome to join us!

Please email Cathy Pitalo at cpitalo@hancockhrc.org for more information on
how to become involved and what it means to #believetheHYPE!