



Submitted photo

Leigh-Anne Shoupe of Hope Haven poses with Ayana Murray on Feb. 25 at the Boys & Girls Club of Bluffton, where the SMART Girls Club learned how to recognize abuse and harmful sexual behavior.

SMART girls learn how to make healthy relationship decisions

Tween and teen girls at the Boys & Girls Club of Bluffton recently learned how to recognize harmful sexual behavior.

As part of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, the Boys & Girls Club of Bluffton brought in speakers from Citizens Opposed to Domestic Abuse and Hope Haven to talk to the SMART Girls Club. On Feb. 20, Mary Beth Cannady from CODA spoke to the girls, ages 11 to 17, about making healthy decisions when it comes to dating and relationships. She conducted an activity called "In Their Shoes," that encouraged the girls to work together exploring real life situations they could face in the dating world. As a group, the girls were able to explore how each decision led to various consequences.

On Feb. 25, the girls got a chance to hear from Leigh-Anne Shoupe from Hope Haven. This session's activity was called "Continuum of Harm," which allowed the girls to learn more about the extreme dangers of sexual abuse including physical, verbal and emotional. They also discussed the harm of issues these girls commonly face such as sexual harassment and bullying.

SMART Girls is a national Boys & Girls Club program that offers young women — ages 8 to 17 — guidance toward healthy attitudes and lifestyles. Through dynamic sessions, group activities, field trips and mentoring opportunities with adult women, club girls enjoy the opportunity to build skills for eating right, staying physically fit, getting good health care, and developing positive relationships.