



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Central Louisiana students score big at Saints Camp

New Orleans Saints lineman Tim Duckworth felt like a kid again on Tuesday, May 13, when he ran through football training drills with Central Louisiana students.

The students were attending the New Orleans Saints/Gatorade Junior Training Camp at Alexandria Senior High School, held in conjunction with The Rapides Foundation and its ***Get Healthy Cenla*** Tobacco Prevention and Control Initiative. The camp was part of the Louisiana Tobacco-Free Sports Statewide Program which promotes physical fitness and sports as healthy alternatives to using tobacco. The Rapides Foundation brought Duckworth to the Alexandria stop on the tour.

"I really think I'm having more fun than some of these kids," Duckworth said. "It is so nice to go somewhere and be welcomed like this."

The participants were from Allen, Catahoula, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides and Vernon parishes.

The Rapides Foundation invited students in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades because they are at high risk of experimenting with tobacco. In Louisiana, the average age that kids begin using tobacco is between 11 and 12.

"About 90 percent of smokers start before the age of 18," said Tammy Moreau, a program officer for The Rapides Foundation. "This is why they have been chosen as the target audience for this event."

Not only did the students meet a New Orleans Saints player, but they also ran through similar drills that the players themselves use while training, and received messages about the dangers of using tobacco.

One of those messages came from Miss Louisiana Amanda Joseph, who said that she lost her grandfather to lung cancer from smoking. Joseph made appearances at each stop on the tour, which included Monroe, Lake Charles, Lafayette and Thibodaux.

She said some boys and girls have no role models, so it is important that they hear positive messages from those who have made good decisions in life, such as herself and Duckworth.

The Rapides Foundation partnered with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospital's Tobacco Control Program, the New Orleans Saints and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports to host the Alexandria event of the Louisiana Tobacco-Free Sports Statewide Tour.

At the end of the event, the students signed a pledge card promising to remain tobacco-free in the future.

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