

Elks National Drug Awareness Program Newsletter

May 17, 2011

Bigg Milt's Life Lessons

The Elks National Drug Awareness Program is pleased to offer Bigg Milt's Life Lessons, featuring Milton "Bigg Milt" Creagh, one of the most in-demand youth speakers in America.

Bigg Milt's Life Lessons is a series of video vignettes intended to help educators keep the conversation about the perils of drug and alcohol use and abuse going throughout the year. Topics range from Michael Jackson to sexting, and all are in a language that today's teens can identify with.

As you know, the Elks National Drug Awareness Program, in collaboration with state Elks associations and local Lodges, bring Bigg Milt to schools across the country to speak to students, teachers, parents and community leaders about the dangers of drug and alcohol use and abuse. But, the school visit is just the beginning of what should be an ongoing dialogue with students about the real

I would like to remind everyone that the annual elks Drug Awareness Training will take place at the Arizona Biltmore Hotel prior to the opening of the Grand Lodge Convention in Phoenix, AZ on July 16th and 17th, 2011. By now you should have sent in your travel form to Grand Lodge. The address or fax number is on the bottom of the form that was sent out. Please do not send them to me! Grand Lodge will make all room reservations at the Biltmore where the training will be held.

Below is a letter we received from a student that attended one of Milton's presentations while in Connecticut. It shows that we are making a difference and we are changing lives!

Letter from Olivia D. from Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School written after Milton's March 31 visit to Tourtellotte Memorial High School where students from QVMCHS were guests

The other day I was told QMC was going on fieldtrip to listen to an inspirational speaker at another school. My first reactions were "oh great this sucks" and "oh well, I don't need to do any school work if I go". When we arrived I saw a rather tall older man by the name of Big Milt who was supposedly our "inspirational" speaker. My thoughts: *great now I get to listen to this old man who probably has no clue about today's generation*, then I took my seat having no clue what really was about to happen.

Turns out Big Milt caught everyone's attention instantly cracking jokes left and right making the audience laugh, I was actually enjoying what this man had to say. He knew exactly what he was doing when he grabbed our attention with his jokes and humor, then all of the sudden out of no where turned completely serious, not a word was spoken except his own turning the auditorium from laughter to a dead silence. To my surprise the person who was about to change many kids lives and become the person who inspired me more than anyone else including my own mother, father and grandparents was standing right in front of me. His words not only opened up the eyes and ears to every stubborn, short attention spanned, typical care free teenager in that auditorium, but most of all our hearts and for some including myself, a new door. I ended up learning more valuable knowledge and information than any school teacher could ever give. Some of his words gave a harsh realization of reality that maybe some wouldn't agree with. However, being a teenager myself, it's what we need to take a step back and think before we make a

life implications of drug and alcohol use and abuse.

Have you hosted Milton in your state? If so, you can order copies of the DVDs for the schools that Milton visited. Just send me the schools' contact information and we'll take it from there. If you are planning to host Milton, let me know how many DVDs you'll need in advance. Remember, Life Lessons are an important follow-up to Milton's original message.

We're confident that you will find Big Milt's Life Lessons a useful tool to bring to schools in your communities to keep students talking about issues facing them daily.

decision instead of basing our actions upon pure careless stupidity.

I have been through many obstacles throughout my life so far and I'm sure there is many more to come. I've always had a great head on my shoulders growing stronger every minute as I prepare to become an adult. Others opinions and advice never interested me because I already knew what they were about to tell me and understood it perfectly. When I make a mistake; well I wouldn't even call it a mistake because when I screw up I know what my consequences are, why I'm doing it, and why what I did was wrong. So really it's just my careless stupid actions. Big Milt changed my perspective completely. His words spoken were not just words, but wisdom and life lessons. I already felt like the man knew my life story and I've never even spoken a word to or met the guy before in my life.

I carry emotional scars that never seem to go away and I avoid dealing with them. When you look at me you'd never know, I look like just a regular teenager, I don't show it or my emotions. Truth is there are moments I feel dead inside, like there is nothing to me, not able to let go of anything that's happened. Because of it I'm literally stuck living each and every day in my past, down this dark road that holds my biggest regrets and fears, sucking me in left wondering in my thoughts, feeling like no one out there could possibly understand or help me.

When I saw an auditorium filled with kids and even adults standing because they were on the same boat as I was, my emotionless expression on my face was then covered in a river of tears that were kept locked inside me for so long, set free, as hard as I tried to fight it, it was impossible. At that moment the wall I had built up inside of me, so high separating myself from everyone came instantly tumbling down at once the pain that I'd constantly felt in my heart disappeared for a moment, I felt like a child all over again taking their first breath.

My wall is still here, but I'm starting to find light where it was once a dark nightmare. All because Big Milt inspired me to move on and live my life, he opened a new door of opportunity where I will only take steps into my future (baby steps at least for now) using my past as a lesson learned and not a nightmare. I used to be an amazing student before my life hit reality hard. After that I cared about nothing, creating my worst habits of giving up. My working effort is about 25% of my true capability. Big Milt made me want to give 110% to my life and work. His words was the slap in the face I needed to wake myself up and continue down the road I want most in life. His powerful words affected every individual in the auditorium differently.

The lesson I have learned from his speech after hearing many tragic stories, is to make my life the most I possibly can make out of it, for only the better. I'm bound to make mistakes somewhere along the way but I will learn from them. It starts by my own choices that no one but myself can make.

My mother is my world, best friend and the reason why I'm still here today and blessed to be where we finally are now. I want to make her proud that she chose to raise me the way she did and the person I turned out to be and still becoming. I don't want to upset her by making the careless decisions I make or the trouble that always seems to follow me. I want to live my dream of making a difference in this world, to give my children the life and childhood I, my mother and father never had. I want to look at my kids, grandchildren, and hopefully my great grandchildren and know I did a good job giving them as much of my wisdom and guidance so one day I will see them grow into great people who will do great things. I'm going to make this happen starting with my self healing and moving on from my mistakes, never ever giving up trying with my fullest potential. This door was the gateway to a final opportunity in life; I've opened it; taken my first steps; and I will not regret another moment of

my life. I cannot thank Big Milt enough for inspiring myself, including many many others, and people he will continue to help. This is MY LIFE and I'm going to LIVE it.

By Olivia D. of QMC

Sincerely,

Kent Gade

Kent Gade

Elks National Drug Awareness Program - National Director