

Start Strong Idaho

BUILDING HEALTHY TEEN RELATIONSHIPS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 20, 2009

Organizational Partners

Idaho Coalition Against
Sexual & Domestic Violence

Idaho Department of Education

St. Luke's Regional Medical Center

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BUILDING HEALTHY TEEN, VAMPIRE, AND WEREWOLF RELATIONSHIPS *Southwest Idaho 11-to-14-year-old teens report controlling and self-destructive behaviors and a willingness to give up everything as signs of true love.*

Collaborating Partners

Academy of American Pediatrics
– Idaho Chapter

Boys & Girls Clubs of Ada County

Boys & Girls Club of Nampa

Central District Health Department

Centers for Disease Control, Prevention
Division of Violence Prevention

FACES

Idaho Department of Health & Welfare

Idaho Health Educator

Idaho Legal Aid Services

Men Today/Men Tomorrow

Nampa Family Justice Center

Silver Sage Girl Scout Council

Treasure Valley Family YMCA

Boise, ID (November 20, 2009) – At the midnight premiere of “New Moon” on Thursday, November 19th, high school teens with *Start Strong Idaho* conducted a survey of 11-to-14-year olds attending the premiere at three theaters in the Boise, Idaho metropolitan area. The *Start Strong Idaho* survey found that 68% of preteens and young teens believed that Edward’s very protective and controlling behaviors towards Bella were a sign of true love. Additionally, 78% believed that Bella’s self destructive behaviors – riding a motorcycle too fast and jumping off a cliff - in the wake of Edward ending their relationship were a sign of true love. Significantly, 87% found Bella’s obsessive behaviors and willingness to give up everything for Edward as a sign of true love.

“The high proportion of 11-14 year olds (primarily girls) who believe that controlling, self destructive, and obsessive behaviors by dating partners are indicative of true love is shocking,” said Dr. Lisa Growette Bostaph, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Boise State University and research advisor to Start Strong Idaho.

“*New Moon* is a pop-culture tsunami,” said Julia Sharkey from Parma, a Start Strong Idaho Teen Council member who was one of the teens conducting the survey. In *New Moon*, vampire-boyfriend Edward leaves Bella because he is afraid he will hurt her. Bella turns to soon-to-be-werewolf friend Jacob for support, and then engages in self-destructive behaviors like riding motorcycles too fast and jumping off a cliff, sure that if she is at risk of death, Edward will return. “It really surprised me what young teens thought about Edward and Bella’s relationship,” said Laura Hampikian, Boise High School student and Start Strong Idaho Teen Council member. Start Strong Idaho teen council members wore “Team Respect: Building Healthy Teen, Vampire, and Werewolf” t-shirts to the premiere, handed out Team Respect buttons and talked to young teens about the characteristics of healthy relationships.

The Twilight Saga: *New Moon* has set a box-office record for midnight screenings and not surprisingly, movie theaters in the Treasure Valley were sold out. Summit Entertainment estimated Friday that it earned \$26.3 million after opening early in the morning. “Teens with *Start Strong Idaho* saw “*New Moon*” as a great opportunity to talk to pre-teens and young teens about healthy and unhealthy relationships,” said Kelly Miller, Project Director Start Strong Idaho. “It is also a teachable moment for parents and their pre-teens and young teens. Teens will talk to each other about relationships, but are less likely to talk to their parents about their crushes or ask their advice about that boy or girl that they’re involved with.” The movie “*New Moon*” offers a way to talk about relationships without invading your pre-teen or young teens privacy.

Start Strong Idaho

BUILDING HEALTHY TEEN RELATIONSHIPS

Start Strong Idaho was recently chosen as 1 of 11 sites from over 500 organizations nationwide to receive \$1 million in funding as part of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*, the largest prevention initiative ever funded to find new breakthrough ways to empower 11 – 14 year olds to break the cycle of violence. *Start Strong Idaho* is a unique partnership of the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence, St. Luke's Children's Hospital, the Idaho Department of Education, and youth programs, health care providers, and teen dating abuse service providers.

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Here are some things parent can talk to their pre-teens and young teens about relationships and “New Moon”:

- Ask what your pre-teen or young teen thinks are the characteristics of a healthy relationship? (Characteristics of healthy relationships are respect, safety, support, individuality, fairness & equality, acceptance, honesty & trust, and communication.)
- Who has a healthier relationship– Bella and Jacob or Bella and Edward? Why?
- What qualities do you see in their relationships? (The relationship between Bella and Jacob has more fairness and equality.) (Edward “protects” Bella – but does Bella really feel safe with Edward? Is Edward doing more than “protecting Bella.” Is he obsessively controlling her? Is that healthy?)
- Bella is smart, independent, and relatively self-assured. But she also always seems to need rescuing and is sometimes portrayed as clumsy or accident-prone (which t appeals to Edward). Why should he get to always play the hero?
- Edward and Bella draw the line at kissing. How realistic do your kids think that is for 17-year-olds? And in New Moon, Bella would rather be turned into a vampire than get married to Edward? What does that say?

For more information on Start Strong Idaho and promoting healthy pre-teen and young teen relationships, contact Kelly Miller at the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence 208 384-0419 or log onto www.startstrongidaho.com.

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About the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence:

The Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence is a statewide non-profit dual coalition that advocates on behalf of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Incorporated in 1980, the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence has grown to become a statewide membership network of shelter programs, counseling programs, law enforcement agencies, victim witness units, prosecutors, and allied professionals – all advocating for the safety and rights of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

About Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years we've brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those we serve. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, we expect to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information visit www.rwjf.org.