

Children's vices fought

Dr. Alan Blum does not take kindly to the media. Calling it, "The American form of communism," he said advertising glamorizes smoking and drinking among children.

But Blum stands ready to fight back. He wants to fight fire with fire. According to the health education specialist, advertising can be used effectively to combat the alcohol and tobacco industries.

Blum spoke before a group of Mohave County and Parker teachers Tuesday, Feb. 24 at the Holiday Inn in Lake Havasu City.

His presentation was sponsored by Western Arizona Health Concepts, a non-profit organization funded by the Center for Disease Control. Working with Blum, Western Arizona Health Concepts is hoping to increase health awareness among youth in Yuma and Mohave counties.

Blum is a family physician in Chicago and one of the founders of Doctors Ought to Care. In selected areas, DOC chapters sponsor extensive and effective advertising, Blum said.

The DOC concept is different than methods used by organizations such as the Heart Association or the Cancer Society. "They do not know how to put their money where their mouth is. They don't know how to advertise," Blum told the teachers. DOC's method is more direct. For example, in answer to ads for "Country Fresh Salem," DOC publicized, "Country Fresh Arsenic." Blum said 30 benches were purchased in a city to carry DOC's messages.



Herald photo

Dr. Alan Blum, right, jots down some notes after his presentation to a group of teachers Tuesday, Feb. 24. Blum, a family physician from Chicago, told

teachers that the mass media is a major influence in encouraging people to smoke and drink.

Three motivators prompt youth today to smoke and drink. Blum said peer pressure, parental modeling and propaganda all influence their decisions.

Arizona's cowboy image and Colorado's mountain image have been ruined through association with alcohol and tobacco companies, Blum said.

Blum told the teachers that they need to fight back. He suggested starting with an economic boycott.

Arizona Health Concepts will provide teachers with visual aids and books about alcohol,

cigarette and drug use for classroom use.

Marcia Duncan of Western Arizona Health Concepts said she encouraged teachers to develop radio spots with their students. Next month, Western Arizona Health Concepts will purchase radio time to air the commercials, she said.