

Doctors to use humor, satire to educate teens about health

By Beth Pate
Entertainment Writer

Two doctors at the Medical College of Georgia are breaking into show business in an effort to help young teenagers take a good look at the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and unused seat belts.

Dr. Rick Richards and Dr. Paul Fischer, both assistant professors in family medicine, have acted as content and script consultants on a Georgia Public Television special to be called "Kids Just Wanna Have Fun."

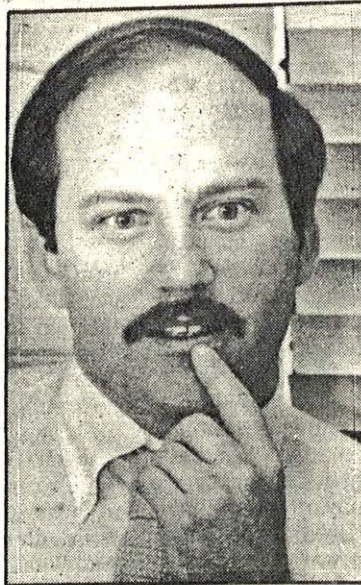
The movie stars comedian Bill Cosby and former President Jimmy Carter and will use music, comedy and action to make its point in an entertaining way.

The movie was initiated by the Carter Center of Emory University. Their investigations showed the three major reasons for poor health to be alcohol, tobacco and auto accidents, Richards said. They decided that an educational effort would have the most benefit for 11 to 13-year olds whose habits are still relatively flexible, he said.

The Carter Center then asked for input from DOC - Doctor's Ought to Care. Richards heads the MCG branch of the organization.

"The concepts of DOC are the basis of the program," he said.

DOC specializes in spoofing commercials to teach people responsible choices, he said. "We take specific ads and turn them inside out so they tell the truth," he said.



Dr. Rick Richards

DOC is the force behind the benches on Walton Way spoofing a Carlton cigarette campaign: If you smoke, please try to quit. They also sponsor the annual "Emphysema Slims" tennis tournament.

"We use Madison Avenue techniques, the ones advertisers use to associate sex, success and a macho image with their products," he said. "But we're showing that Virginia Slims are the opposite of sexiness, that Marlboro isn't rugged, its being manipulated."

In "Kids Just Wanna Have Fun," the program takes this same ap-

proach to educating teens.

The movie will create situations so that the same images an advertiser uses to promote cigarettes or alcohol will be exposed for what they really are, Richards said, "totally ridiculous."

"The show will be funny," he said, "the messages will probably be secondary. We won't dwell on the health consequences. We probably won't even mention cancer."

"The first script was factual, but would have been boring. Teenagers could care less about the facts, they want to know what's going to impress their friends."

Impressing friends by smoking, drinking or driving fast is an idea promoted by advertising and television shows like the "Dukes of Hazard," he said.

"It's not a smoking problem, its an advertising problem," Richards said.

More than 90 percent of children that smoke, smoke Marlboro cigarettes, he said. "There would be no peer pressure to smoke Marlboro if there wasn't advertising," he said.

The script is designed to that different segments of the show can be used separately in junior high and high school classes. DOC also is planning to write a curriculum guide to accompany the segments, he said. "We hope to have it ready for winter semester," he said.

The show is expected to air at 8 p.m. Oct. 28 on Georgia Public Television.