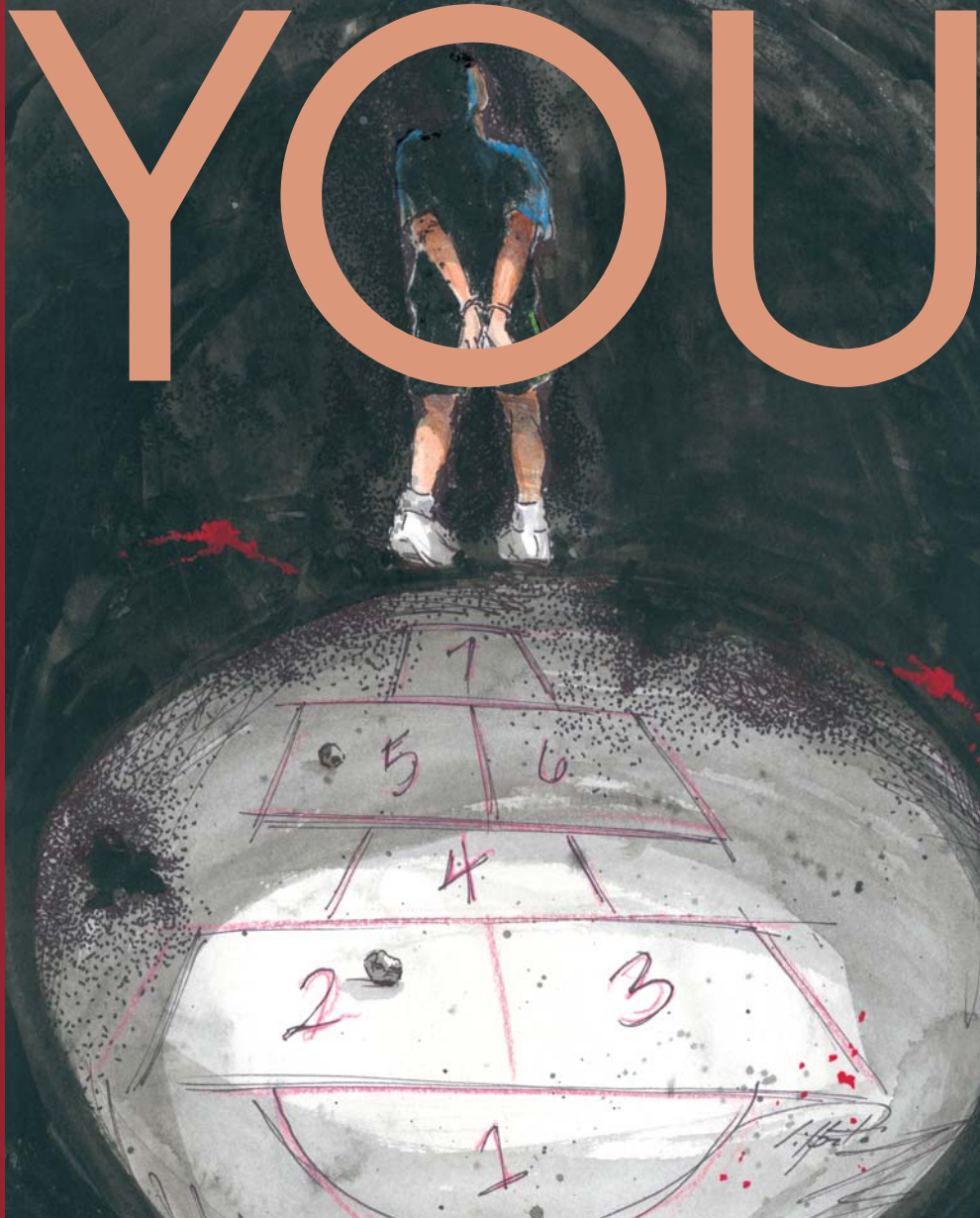


**IT COULD BE**



*TYLA Wants Kids to  
Speak Out Against Crime*

BY ANITA DAVIS

### **“WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT CRIME?” ASKED**

Texas Young Lawyers Association President Andrew Strong of 30 eighth-graders at Marshall Middle School in Houston’s inner city.

The students were no strangers to crime and violence. One girl volunteered that she had a friend who had been shot and killed. One student said someone had brought a big knife to school. Several students said they knew on which street corners they could get drugs.

“What can you do to make your school, your community, and yourself safe?” asked Strong. “You can speak out against crime in your school. It’s the right thing to do. It can save a friend’s life. It can save your own life.”

Strong visited the school in mid-December for the roll-out of TYLA’s newest program, “It Could Be You: Speak Out Against Crime in Your School.” The program aims to help students make the right choices in situations they may encounter in middle school and high school, and to inform them of possible consequences that they, their peers, and their school may face if they make the wrong choices.

Strong introduced the program with a 28-minute video, which, along with the curriculum, is available to TYLA affiliates, middle schools, and high schools. In the first of two scenarios dramatized in the video, Laura, a girl on a middle school campus, buys pills from another student and later swallows one of the pills. Her friend Rebecca sees her buying the pills and later observes how strange Laura acts. Still later, when they are both at their lockers, Laura collapses and dies.

Strong stopped the film and asked, “Was there anything Rebecca could have done to save her friend?”

“She could have told her friend not to take the pill,” answered one girl.

“Is there an adult she could have confided in about what she saw?” asked Strong. “In your school, whom do you trust? Who can you go to?”

The answers ranged from “nobody” to “mom,” “coach,” and “Principal Gonzales,” who stood in the doorway and smiled and nodded. Juan Gonzales knows most of the 1,120 students by name, and stands in the hall between classes and out on the school yard after school, keeping a watchful eye on the students.

*Andrew Strong, TYLA president, talks with students at Marshall Middle School in Houston about speaking out against crime in their school, this year’s TYLA focus program.*



Strong turned on the video again, and the scenes repeated, depicting how Rebecca could have helped prevent her friend’s death. Rebecca could have warned Laura that Laura had no way of knowing what was in the pills, or she could have reported the sale of drugs to the principal, or she could have spoken to the teacher when she noticed Laura acting strangely. Rebecca might have lost Laura as a friend, but maybe could have saved Laura’s life.

“This has nothing to do with being a snitch,” Strong said firmly. “You can make a difference when someone makes a bad decision by speaking out.”



## IT COULD BE YOU: KIDS SPEAK OUT AGAINST CRIME



In the second vignette, two boys in a gang plan a drive-by shooting “to get even.” A third boy overhears. Should he report it to school security, Crime Stoppers, or the police? He fears the gang will find out and says, “There’s no telling what they will do to me.”

“The right thing to do is often not the easy thing to do,” said Strong after the film.

David Henderson, a member of Houston Young Lawyers Association and an associate with Vinson & Elkins, L.L.P., also addressed the students.

“How many crimes have you seen committed at your school?” asked Henderson, as he passed out a survey asking students what crimes they had observed.

“What is an assault?” one asked. “It is attacking someone,” answered Henderson.

“I see fights a lot,” said one student.

“I’ve seen kids smoke pot,” said another.

Henderson told the students that the responsible thing to do is to “Speak out — sometimes to the person doing it, other times to an adult you can trust.”

“Be prepared to take action when needed,” summed up Strong. “*It could be you* who reports the crime or *it could be you* who gets hurt. Stand up and be a responsible citizen.”

For more information on “It Could Be You,” visit the TYLA website at [www.tyla.com](http://www.tyla.com).

*Students discuss the TYLA program, “It Could Be You.”*

## IT COULD BE YOU: SPEAK OUT AGAINST CRIME IN YOUR SCHOOL

More than one-third of 15,877 students surveyed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics said they don’t feel safe at school. The TYLA wants kids not to be part of these statistics:

- In the United States, 50 percent of all arson arrests involve people under age 18 (*Office of Juvenile Justice National Report Series Bulletin, December 2001*)
- Three million crimes per year are committed on school campuses (*U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2002*)
- One out of five girls is physically or sexually assaulted while on a date (*Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 286, pp. 572-579*)
- 80 percent of all school deaths are caused by guns (*National School Safety Center, Report on School-Associated Violent Deaths, June 3, 2002*)
- 91 percent of all students have access to guns (*Josephson Institute on Ethics, 2000 Report Card on Ethics of American Youth: Violence and Substance Abuse*)
- Every two hours, a young person commits suicide (*American Psychiatric Association, Let’s Talk About Teen Suicide, 1999*)
- One out of every four students is drunk at school at least once a year (*Josephson Institute on Ethics, 2000 Report Card on Ethics of American Youth: Violence and Substance Abuse*)
- 97 percent of all students have access to drugs (*Josephson Institute on Ethics, 2000 Report Card on Ethics of American Youth: Violence and Substance Abuse*)