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Health rally to give students pep [The Ottawa Herald, Kan.]

(Ottawa Herald (KS) Via Acquire Media NewsEdge) Jun. 6--Cherry Coen doesn't like to see it.

High school students eating fast-food burgers multiple times a week, not exercising, not paying attention to their weight.

It bothers Coen, family and consumer science teacher at Ottawa High School, to know that often these students don't recognize the health risks.

"Kids have a hard time realizing that what they do today will affect them when they are older," Coen said.

But Coen and six Ottawa High School students say they hope to change that, and hope they can make a difference in their school.

Coen and the students will attend the Kansas Action for Healthy Kids Teen Wellness PEP Rally Monday and Tuesday at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe.

"I'm very excited about it," Brandi Brockus, who will be a senior in the fall, said. "I just want to see how it will all turn out with our school." The PEP rally, which stands for peers encouraging peers, serves to educate students about obesity in the school environment. Students will take part in fitness activities -- like a scavenger hunt using a handheld GPS device, miniature golf, bowling -- and will write and produce health-focused YouTube videos.

"The idea is that you get a core group of kids that you want to get involved," Coen said.

In addition, Coen said the students will design their own grant proposal that will somehow promote wellness at OHS and the community. If the grant is chosen, the students could win \$500.

"We want to try to get some new after-school activities to do," Brockus said. "I think it helps you with your school." Coen said she selected the students based on their involvement in such school organizations as Family Community and Career Leaders of America.

"I tried to get a group I thought would work well together," Coen said. "A

group that would carry it out after they get back."The statewide rally is free and is designed to increase student involvement in school-based health and wellness activities.

"I'd like to make a change in that," Coen said. "I'd like to help (students) live a healthier life."

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