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## Institute seminar brings message to teens, parents



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By Lisa DeNeal Post-Tribune correspondent September 23, 2014 9:52AM

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Lunches from Potbelly which were paid for by Indiana's First Lady Karen Pence in Gary on September 22, 2014. | Jim Karczewski/For Sun-Times Media

GARY — Fifty parents and their children enjoyed free bag lunches from Potbelly Sandwich Shop courtesy of Indiana first lady Karen Pence while attending the Indiana Parenting Institute's "Family Day" celebration.

"Family Day" was initiated in 2001 by CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Columbia as a national movement to celebrate parental engagement.

The Indiana Parenting Institute's headquarters at 1775 W. 41st Ave. is adjacent to Lighthouse Academy, which has permitted the institute to conduct meetings and activities there.

Pence was unable to attend.

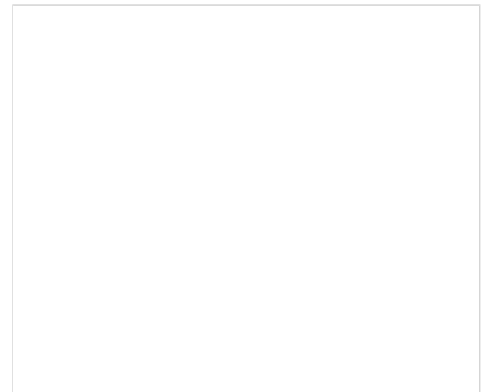
Indiana Parenting Institute founder and executive director Laura Smith-Wynn said Lighthouse Academy approached her about having an outreach initiative for parents and students from the academy, as well as throughout the community.

"We all want our children to be successful, productive children who grow up to be successful adults," Smith-Wynn said. "We thrive on having parental involvement in their children's lives."

Speakers discussed various subjects that were detrimental to parents and students.

"I believe a person, whether it's a parent or a student, should be financially healthy," said board member Martie Rivas-Ramos, branch manager and vice president of First Midwest Bank in Munster.

Lake County Substance Abuse Council coordinator Amanda Morrison presented parents with a Parent Resource Guide that will help them talk to their children about substance abuse and told parents that marijuana use among youth from seventh to 12th grade has



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dramatically increased in Indiana.

“One of the problems is, young people believe that smoking marijuana is OK,” she said. “This likely derives from them seeing and hearing about the legalization of marijuana use for medicinal reasons,” she said.

Other speakers included Lake County Coroner Merrilee Frey.

“The best way to avoid a drug overdose is to not even start using drugs,” Frey said. “Just say no. If someone pressures you, go to an adult teacher, counselor, your parents.”

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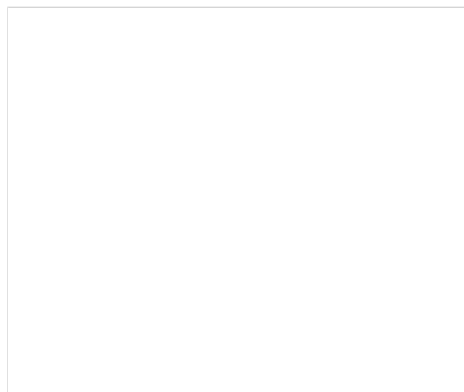
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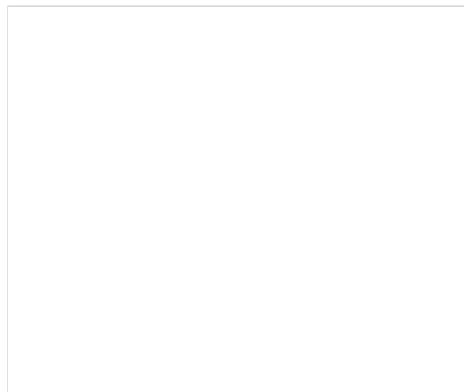
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