Yellow Dress performance teaches dating violence awareness

by JB Clark/NEMS Daily Journal   2/17/13 [Original Article](#)

Katara Brooks, 15, center, talks to Rydia Vielehr about the warning signs of domestic violence at the Boys & Girls Club in Tupelo on Thursday afternoon after a performance about the subject. (LAUREN WOOD | DAILY JOURNAL)

Rydia Vielehr, wearing her bloodied yellow dress, talks about when domestic violence goes too far. (LAUREN WOOD | DAILY JOURNAL)

TUPELO – Some Tupelo students got a better understanding of how dating violence can affect them and their peers with a production of The Yellow Dress.

The one-woman show is a dramatic performance in which a teenage girl tells the audience about her exciting relationship.

The show was performed for the Lee County Improvement Center and Tupelo Boys & Girls Club Northside campus Thursday and the Tupelo Christian Preparatory School Friday.

Over the arc of the half-hour show, the tone turns dark.

"We talk about the early warning signs of dating violence and different things that can come up," said Rydia Vielehr, the actress portraying the show's sole character, Anna. "It's not about each individual warning sign but the pattern of abuse and how that pattern can show up. It's more about a lot of signs coming up."

The signs Vielehr is talking about include an explosive temper, constant belittling, physical abuse, possessiveness, mood swings, false accusations and extreme jealousy.

Tupelo's S.A.F.E. shelter is sponsoring the production as a part of its Dating Violence Awareness Month programming.

"I go into a lot of places and talk about dating violence and it's just a different way to experience it if someone is speaking about it from a first-person point of view, even it it's a dramatic production," said S.A.F.E. Community Educator Amelia Parkes. "It helps the audience experience it better than me saying, 'Don't do this.'"

After the show, Vielehr leads the students in a discussion about how to prevent dating violence.

jb.clark@journalinc.com