

# Books for Schools— Local Businesses Called to Help Students

By Meg Edenburn

**Former** Juvenile Probation Officer LuAnn Davis visited a 9th-grade classroom in Forsyth County and asked, “How many of you feel like you have already ruined your lives?” Shockingly, one out of five students raised their hands. Davis then assured them that there was hope. Anyone can turn himself or herself around and build a life they love. She said, “There comes a time when you need to get your train on the right track and start moving in a positive direction. You start by picking a new destination and making new choices.”

This excerpt is just one of hundreds of stories that are now being shared in classrooms across the county, as captured in the new book *Under the Influence: The Town That Listened to its Kids*. In fact, every middle and high school principal in the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools put the book on their “wish list” as a new resource to teach healthy choices. However, the schools need community partners to sponsor the classroom sets.

Tony Ebron,  
president of  
Winston-Salem

**Health literacy—learning to navigate negative peer pressure—is critical for our young people.**

Federal Credit Union, sponsored nine sets of *Under the Influence* and said, “Health literacy—learning to navigate negative peer pressure—is critical for our young people. We need to support the schools in every way that we can.” “Today’s students,” said Parkland Principal Dr. Tim Lee, “don’t like to be told how to think. These students want to discover the answers for themselves. This book lets them learn from other people’s true stories and then gives them safe websites and toll-free hot lines so they can talk out their problems with caring adults.” Principal Lee “wished” for 350 books—and The United Way of Forsyth County made his wish come true.

The basis of the book is 15 years of research in Forsyth County and its public school system by school volunteer and award-winning journalist,



Business leaders Teresa Freer, LuAnn Davis, Tony Ebron, Mayor Allen Joines and Dr. Tony Burton take the lead in sponsoring books for the schools.]

Patty Jo Sawvel. According to Sawvel, “Students will see role models in every size, shape, and color because this is the true story of Forsyth County. The book demonstrates how adults and teens can work together to tackle issues like drugs and bullying. Now businesses are being called upon to help take this to the next level.”

For Teresa Freer, co-owner of Pf Plumbing, it was an easy decision. She sponsored all three “wished for” sets for her alma mater, West Forsyth High School. Freer said, “These teens will grow up to be a part of our community. I feel that these books are a huge asset in helping students make wise choices personally, as well as for their community.” Dr. Tony Burton, CEO of Northwest Child Development Centers, operates a non-profit. However, that is not stopping him from helping the kids. He’s calling upon his business partners to sponsor books. As he explains, “This book is designed so that a true story will be read, and then students will engage in a discussion. It lets them arrive at their own solutions—so they experience ownership. Simply put, it’s kid-friendly for our modern student.”

Clemmons Middle School Principal Sandra Hunter agrees. She has three sets on her “wish list.” She’s especially excited about the user-friendly Teen Handbook and Parent Handbook sections. Principal Hunter said, “This is the book we’ve been waiting for. How often do we get a chance to read about our own community when we are learning something as valuable as life skills and healthy choices?”

As one would expect, when Mayor Allen Joines of Winston-Salem first heard the call for help, he immediately sponsored a set of books. Proactive in helping the youths on many fronts, including his Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative, Mayor Joines said, “This is something our business community can really get behind. It’s a way for us to build a stronger village by uniting our business and school communities.” Incidentally, LuAnn Davis, mentioned at the onset, is now a mortgage loan officer with Premier Commercial Bank. She sponsored three sets of books.

Currently, 40% of the schools are still waiting for their “wish” to come true. Those interested in sponsoring classroom sets can get more information under the “community” tab at the website [www.UnderTheInfluence.Org](http://www.UnderTheInfluence.Org), by contacting author Patty Jo Sawvel at [pjsawvel@gmail.com](mailto:pjsawvel@gmail.com), or by calling 336-869-9102.