

# Former basketball star Unseld speaks to students on abuse

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When former basketball star Wes Unseld stood up from his chair, the students at Richard Montgomery High School laughed.

Unseld, the 6-foot-7-inch former center for the Washington Bullets, instantly dwarfed a group of Rockville officials standing with him on stage in the school auditorium.

But laughter stopped as Unseld told students about the evils of drug abuse.

Accompanying Unseld were Rockville Mayor Steven Van Grack and Police Chief Jared D. Stout, who also spoke last week as part of the city's Drug Awareness Week, a program highlighted by appearances from athletes including Mark Mosley, former field goal kicker for the Washington Redskins. The program continues this week.

At the Thursday morning school assembly, Unseld told students the choices they make today affect not only their future, but that of the country. He, like others, urged students to "say no" to drugs.

"There are a lot of problems that you will have to face if you want to become a functional person," Unseld said. "And if you don't learn how to stand for something, you will fall for everything."

The Kentucky native, currently vice president of the Bullets organization, reminded students about the cocaine-induced death of Maryland basketball star Len Bias in June. Unseld said students are also getting mixed signals watching former athletes tout beer as "less filling" or "tastes great."

Unseld said after the assembly that he does not believe you can scare kids into avoiding drugs. Instead you have to educate them about the dangers of drugs.

"I think all experts say you can't scare kids. It didn't work for me and it certainly won't work for them."

Parents play a critical role in keeping their children drug-free and teenagers, in turn, must respect them, Unseld said. "They have to realize



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**Wes Unseld warns high school students to stay away from drugs. "And if you don't learn how to stand for something, you will fall for everything," he says.**

that what (parents) say about drugs is just as important as what their friends have to say."

Rockville's "Say No" campaign includes assemblies at all public and private elementary, junior high and high schools and complements the drug awareness programs in county schools.

Van Grack said he believes the city's anti-drug program is working.

"There's no doubt in my mind because I hear people say they heard the message and were tuned in the whole time."

"I thought it was pretty effective," said Susan Olson, a senior at Richard Montgomery, who said the pressures to try drugs in high school are heavy.

"He talked on a real personal level with the students."