



# Parents Are Heroes

A Newsletter of the Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) Program,  
a Drug-Free Communities Project for Kent County, Michigan

December Edition 2008

### In this issue:

- Parents Who Monitor Teens and Model Moderation Can Reduce Teen's Use of AOD
  - Make Calls to Other Parents
  - Provide Punishment-free Help to Kids in Danger
  - Explain why AOD is Especially Harmful to Teens
- Did You Know?

Notice: MSA Theatre Troupe forming.  
Contact [cajackson.msa@gmail.com](mailto:cajackson.msa@gmail.com)

### Quick Facts:

'Light' and Regular Cigarettes Deliver Equal Amounts of Nicotine. Light is NOT healthier  
<http://members.jointogether.org/ct/1pACHU71tEJ1/>

Women who consume even one alcoholic drink weekly while pregnant are more likely to have children with behavioral problems than women who abstain.  
<http://www.jointogether.org/news/research/>

Early Exposure To Drugs, Alcohol Creates Lifetime of Health Risk. People who began drinking and using marijuana regularly prior to their 15th birthday face a higher risk of early pregnancy, as well as a

## More on Effective Parenting Strategies for Reducing Underage Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)

In the November 2008 Parents Are Heroes Newsletter, we reported on the first of three parenting strategies (Reducing Misperceptions through Dialogue) that parents can employ to reduce their children's likelihood of using AOD during their teen years. In this edition we will report on the other two.

**1. Monitoring Activities.** Results of the MSA Parent Survey revealed that most parents (99%) would welcome phone calls from other parents to be sure that no underage AOD use would be allowed at teen events in their home and that there will be adult supervision, but some parents fear that such a phone call would be perceived as interference, therefore:  
only 50% of parents usually make the call to check on AOD availability, and only 77% make the call to check on Adult supervision.

In order to emphasize their commitment to keeping kids AOD-free, to share that commitment with the local community, and to demonstrate to their children that their disapproval of underage use of AOD is strong and ongoing, it is important that **all parents make these calls** whenever their children ask permission to attend a party or other event at a friend's house.

The MSA Survey shows that most parents do use other monitoring strategies. For instance, 97% normally wait up until their children get home in the evening.

Another important strategy that will be studied in the next Parent Survey is to assure your children that if they find themselves in trouble re. AOD, that they can call home for help (and will not be punished as a result). Students in a local high school surveyed reported that they have either **ridden with a driver who has been drinking** OR that **they themselves have driven after drinking**: 64% of those who drank just once, and 100% of those who drank 5 times in the in the past 30 days, say they have made this risky choice.

Consequence	Number of Drinking Occasions in Past 30					
	1	2	3	4	5	
Drove after using AOD or rode with a driver who has used AOD	64%	78%	74%	83%	100.0%	93%

An important follow-up to rescuing your child from such a consequence is to refer him/her to the STARR intervention program at your high school or to arrange for "substance use" counseling at a local agency. This is not punishment, but an extension of the rescue.

**2. Modeling Moderation or Abstinence.** Like about 60% of Americans, most parents of teens in Kent County drink moderately or, like another 20%, do not drink at all. Parents surveyed averaged about one-half drink per week. More than 11% never

pattern of school failure, substance dependence, sexually-transmitted disease and criminal convictions that lasts into their 30s.

*Psychological Science.*  
<http://www.cadca.org/CoalitionsOnline/article.asp?id=2010>

Signs of marijuana use:

#### Behaviors

- Cigarette use before age 15
- Alcohol use before age 15
- 20 or more unexcused school absences
- Drug arrest
- Alcohol arrest

#### Attitudes/Opinions

- Marijuana &
- Cigarettes are safe
- My parents think it's OK to smoke marijuana & cigarettes

[http://www.dewsine.org/dews/pubs/investigates\\_mas.pdf](http://www.dewsine.org/dews/pubs/investigates_mas.pdf)

#### What/Who is MSA?

The MSA Project is Sponsored by the Kent County SA Prevention Leadership Coalition and Implemented by the ALERT Labs (Alcohol Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training) Group.\* MSA is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through SAMHSA's "Drug Free Communities Support Program:" see [www.alertlabs.org](http://www.alertlabs.org)

To send us Questions, Suggestions, and Comments , click on [info@alertlabs.org](mailto:info@alertlabs.org)

To see previous MSA Newsletters, click on

<http://www.alertlabs.org/newsletter.php>

drink, about 1/3 drink less than once per month, and only about 1/5<sup>th</sup> drink once a week. Since the beginning of the MSA program in 2006, **parents in MSA high school communities have reduced their drinking by 15%**, thus serving as better models for their children.

For answers to questions about why it is OK for adults to drink but not for children, see the MSA brochure recently mailed home by your school, "21 Reasons Teens and Alcohol Don't Mix," or go to <http://www.alertlabs.org/articles.php>.

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## Did You Know

68 percent of U.S. children who died in car crashes involving alcohol were riding with a driver who had consumed alcohol,...

<http://www.jointogether.org/sa/news/summaries/reader/0%2C1854%2C569039%2C00.html>

Nine (9) youth die every day from alcohol-related causes in the United States. [Keeping Kids From Drinking](#)

**Make Sure Your Teens' Doctors Discuss Substance Use with Them.** Federal guidelines specifically state that physicians should "provide screening and guidance about high-risk health behaviors," but a new study suggests that physicians are ignoring the guidelines ...at least 70 percent of teens studied say their doctor did not discuss substance use....

Failure to provide preventive care to avoid risky behavior, impacts teen health not only in adolescence, but also throughout their lifetime." More details in [Journal of Adolescent Health](#). See also the [Center for the Advancement of Health](#), Dec. 1, 2008.

**About 1/3 of Kids Get First Drink from Parents.** Many kids get their first taste of alcohol from their parents, but it's not usually the result of raiding the family liquor cabinet... researchers from the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health found that among 12-year-olds who had consumed alcohol, a third said their parents had given them their first drink. Just a handful reported stealing from the family liquor cabinet, and only 2.4 percent said they got alcohol from a commercial establishment. See [Preventive Medicine, 2007](#).

**Popular Teens Most Likely to Get Drunk and to Use Other Drugs:** Teens who consider themselves the most popular and who attend drug-infested schools\* are 1) 10 times likelier to abuse prescription drugs; 2) nine times likelier to use illegal drugs other than marijuana or prescription drugs; 3) five times likelier to get drunk at least monthly; and 4) four and a half times likelier to use marijuana and smoke or chew tobacco compared to popular teens at drug-free schools.

\**drug-infested schools* are those in which students say they have personally witnessed illegal drug use, dealing, possession, students drunk and/or students high on their school grounds. See

**National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XII,**

[www.casacolumbia.org/absolutenm/templates/ChairmanStatements.aspx?articleid=500&zoneid=31](http://www.casacolumbia.org/absolutenm/templates/ChairmanStatements.aspx?articleid=500&zoneid=31)

**About 40 percent of children ages 8 to 10 have tried alcohol,** often without the knowledge of their parents...*Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, Jan 2008.

**The ALERT Labs Group:** *Project Director, Nancy L. Harper, Ph.D., Dean of Social Sciences and Professor Communication (ret.), Director, ALERT Labs Consulting; Project Coordinator, Shannon D. Welsh, M.Ed., Welsh Advertising; Project Evaluator, Donald (Tex) Bryant, M.S. & M.Ed., Director of Bryant Statistical Consulting, STARR Counselor for screening and intervention, Geoffery L. Stevens, LMSW, DeMey Southeast Clinic, Pine Rest Christian Services; Project Theatre Coordinator, Carla Jackson, Certified in Secondary Education and Peer Mentoring/Listening.*

## DAILY MANTRAS FOR KEEPING YOUR TEEN DRUG-FREE

**I Will Talk to My Teen About Drugs:** Only a third of parents talk to their teens about the risks of using drugs and alcohol, despite research showing that kids are less likely to use if parents have these conversations.

**I Will Set Clear “No-Drug” Rules:** Telling your teen that drugs and alcohol are not allowed—and outlining the consequences for breaking the rules—are important steps to keeping your child drug-free.

**I Will Be More Involved:** Teens whose parents are involved in their lives are less likely to use illicit drugs or alcohol, or to be involved in other risky behaviors. Talk to other parents about their rules and level of involvement, too.

**I Will Ask the Right Questions:** Know what your children are doing when they are away from you, where they go and who their friends are. Know what they do on and offline. And monitor digital activities, too, such as Internet usage, text messaging and social networking sites.

**I Will Stay on Top of Emerging Drug Threats:** Keep up with what new drug trends teens might be into, such as using prescription drugs to get high. Track quantities of medications in your own home; dispose of old pills safely and properly, and ask others, such as family members, to do the same.

For more advice on keeping your teen drug-free, and to connect with other parents like you, visit [www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com).

### Think you know your teen's world?

**mnE Ps dnt bleev der is a gNR8N d/c b/t em n thr teen.** (Text Message

Translation: Many parents don't believe there is a generation disconnect between them and their teen.) How much do parents really know about their teen's world?

Especially as teens adopt new technologies so quickly?

#### Test your knowledge about teen life and lingo.

What do “space cakes” and “skittles” have in common?

- a) They are popular snacks
- b) They are sold in many convenience stores
- c) They are harmless-sounding names for drugs
- d) They are sold as high-energy drinks and contain high doses of caffeine

Who have the media dubbed as “prosti-tots”?

- a) Teenage girls who date older guys to get drugs
- b) Scantly dressed teenage girls who emulate young, wild celebrities
- c) Teens who bring more than one date to a party
- d) Drug dealers who are known to deal to children

## ACTION ITEMS FOR PARENTS OF TEENS

These tasks take you a step closer to bridging the generation gap with your teen. To learn more about how parents like you are connecting better with their teens, try these Action Items and report back at [www.TheAntiDrug.com/ParentChronicles](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com/ParentChronicles):

- Pick up your teen's mp3 player and go to the “Top 25 Most Played” section. Listen for references to alcohol, drugs or other risky behaviors. Then talk with your teen about what you heard.
- Visit social networking sites like MySpace.com, and browse the profiles of teens your child's age to see what they say, what their interests are and what they are doing online.
- Can you name your teen's favorite TV show? Watch it with him or her and discuss story lines.
- Go to a video sharing Web site and type in “smoking weed.” Watch some of the videos. Did you know that your teen might be exposed to these images?

**PARENTS.**  
THE ANTI-DRUG.



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National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign