



# Parents Are Heroes

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

November Edition 2008

### In this issue:

- **How Parents Can Reduce or Eliminate Their Children's Use of AOD**
  - Listen,
  - Invite Opinions
  - Tell the Truth
- **Did You Know?**

**Notice: MSA Theatre Troupe forming. Contact tucker98@netscape.com**

Approximately two-thirds of students with “mostly A’s” are non-drinkers, while nearly half of students with “mostly D’s and F’s” report binge drinking.

[www.faceproject.org/FreshStory/Stories/July07/FreshStory-1.html](http://www.faceproject.org/FreshStory/Stories/July07/FreshStory-1.html)

A study of 10,000 Minnesota College students revealed that binge drinking causes about a 1/3 decrease in overall grades and smoking causes about a ¼ decrease.

[www.bhs.umn.edu/healthdata/results/PressRelease\\_BoyntonOct2008.pdf](http://www.bhs.umn.edu/healthdata/results/PressRelease_BoyntonOct2008.pdf)

In 1999, New Zealand lowered its drinking age from 20 to 18. Not only did the alcohol-involved crash rate increase among 18 and 19 year olds, but also among 15-17 year olds.

[www.madd.org/Media-Center/Media-Center/Media-Library/Press-Kits/Press-Kits/Support-for-21-Minimum-Drinking-Age-Law.aspx](http://www.madd.org/Media-Center/Media-Center/Media-Library/Press-Kits/Press-Kits/Support-for-21-Minimum-Drinking-Age-Law.aspx)

Parents of teenagers underestimate how easy it is for teens to buy beer and prescription drugs, and

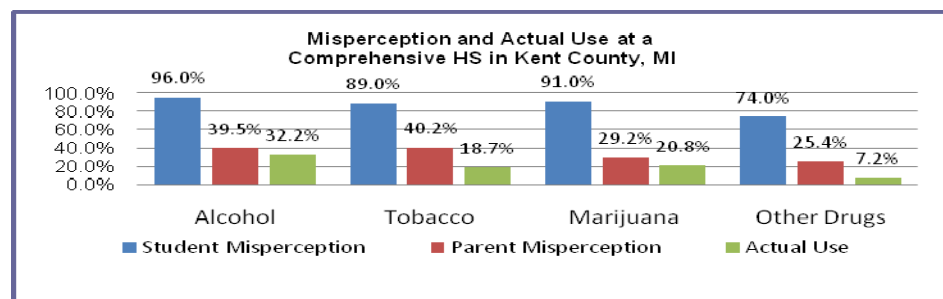
## Effective Parenting Strategies for Reducing and Eliminating Underage Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)

The MSA Parent Survey reveals that 95% of high school student parents believe that they can prevent underage drinking and drug use among their children. Fortunately, both national and MSA research supports parents’ belief and suggests effective strategies: **Correcting Misperceptions Through Dialogue, Monitoring Teenagers’ Activities, and Modeling Moderation in the Use of Alcohol and Other (Legal) Drugs.** We will report on MSA research on Misperceptions now, and on Monitoring and Modeling in the December Newsletter.

**Correcting Misperceptions Through Dialogue:** Talk that is supportive and based on solid information about AOD is one of the best prevention strategies. Parents who are effective engage in frequent, casual give-and-take with their kids a) by listening to what they talk about with each other, b) by asking nonthreatening questions about their reaction to relevant events in the community (including school), and c) by sharing with their kids facts they have learned about AOD use and consequences from a variety of sources. For instance, by pointing out that scientific surveys of their peers show that nearly 70% of local HS students do not use AOD, parents can help to resolve misperceptions of peer pressure and reinforce their own disapproval of underage drinking and other drug use.

**97% of parents in the three schools surveyed disapprove of students in 9-12th grade using alcohol, but only about 60% of these parents have told their children that they disapprove.**

Explaining to HS kids that most teens – and most parents – have misperceptions about underage use of AOD, believing that it is more common than it really is, can help students to understand that “Not Using” is actually the norm. The following chart shows typical misperceptions in a Kent County comprehensive high school community:



**Interpreting the graph:** Go to “Other Drugs.” Survey questions ask for an estimate of the percent of students in this high school who use other drugs (not alcohol, nicotine, or marijuana). Students estimated 74%. Parents estimated 25.4%. Actual use as measured by the student survey is 7.2% -- so, about 93%

overestimate how easy it is for teens to buy cigarettes.  
[http://img.getactivehub.com/gv/2/custom\\_images/jointogether/s/pacer.gif](http://img.getactivehub.com/gv/2/custom_images/jointogether/s/pacer.gif)

[American Journal of Public Health](#)A recent study concluded that individuals with higher childhood intelligence scores could be more prone to drinking problems later in life.  
[States Using Social Marketing to Curb Underage Drinking](#)  
 Minnesota hopes to change misperceptions through a combination of billboard messages, newspaper ads, blogging, text messages and Web sites. For example, a survey found that **78 percent of Minnesota students in grades seven through 12 drink less than once a month**, yet 68 percent of students think most students drink once a month or more.

**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 [www.alertlabs.org/bb/v/iewtopic.php?p=47#47](http://www.alertlabs.org/bb/v/iewtopic.php?p=47#47)

of students do not use meth, crack/cocaine, LSD, Ecstasy, etc.

## Did You Know

### Correct Responses to AOD Knowledge Questions on MSA Parent Survey:

- Underage drinking results in permanent damage to the memory. **True= 75%**
- Adolescents need only drink half as much as adults to suffer the same negative effects on the brain. **True= 81%**
- Teens that drink frequently usually outgrow alcohol use and do not become problem drinkers or addicts as adults. **False= 90%**
- Underage drinking usually leads to lower grade point averages. **True= 90%**
- The younger a person is when starting to drink, the higher the chances of alcohol addiction. **True= 96%**

**Nationally, Nonmedical Use of Prescription Pain Relievers** has risen 12% since 2002 among 18 – 24 year olds. The majority of users say they got the drug free from a friend or relative: [www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduhlatest.htm](http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduhlatest.htm)

### MSA research from 2008 reveals that about 15% of students in Kent Co. high schools studied *have used a prescription medication to get high.*

Fortunately, about 90% of students in these schools *disagreed* with the following statement: "Using prescription medications to get high is safer than using street drugs." As adults know, legal drugs can be as deadly as illegal drugs when used for "recreation."

### Most Parents Surveyed by MSA Know Whether or NOT Their Children Use Tobacco or Other's Prescriptions But Are Less Accurate in Estimating Use of Alcohol and Marijuana

| % Parents who believe their child DOES NOT use | % Teens Who Do NOT use | % of Parents' Misperception | % Parents who would be upset if their child used |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Alcohol 82%                                    | 68.8%                  | 16%                         | 98% (83% extremely)                              |
| Tobacco 85%                                    | 81.3%                  | 4 %                         | 97% (77% extremely)                              |
| Marijuana 95%                                  | 84.2%                  | 11%                         | 94% (91% extremely)                              |
| Other Drugs 95%                                | 92.8%                  | 3%                          | 99% (94% extremely)                              |

**Most Teens (about 60%) Who Use AOD Need Further Screening and/or Intervention Through MSA's STARR Program (Screening, Testing, And Referral for Recovery is free through the Disciplinary Program at MSA High Schools).** Consult with your School's **Disciplinary Officer** or **self-refer** through email: [geofferystevens@mei.net](mailto:geofferystevens@mei.net) or call 269-929-2333.

**According to the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health**, 60% of teens aged 12 to 17 in 2007, who were heavy drinkers (i.e., consumed five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days), also used illegal drugs, which was higher than the rate among nondrinkers (5%). <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k7nsduh/2k7Results.cfm#Fig2-4>

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