Parents Are Heroes

A Newsletter of the Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) Program,
a Drug-Free Communities Project to Prevent Adolescent Alcohol and Other Drug Use
Supported by the Kent County Prevention Coalition

August/September Edition 2009

In this issue:

- ***Teens whose parents tell them that they DISAPPROVE of underage AOD use, DON'T DRINK***
- ***How Do You Tell Them?***

On SEPTEMBER 29, Tuesday, go to Family Day Picnic, Share advice with other Parents and Professionals on talking to your teens about AOD. Starts at 5:30 at John Ball Zoo Picnic area.
info@alertlabs.org

To see previous MSA Newsletters, click below
alertlabs.org/newsletter.php

- ***Did You Know?***

Drinkers who had their first drink before the age of 13 were twice as likely to have unplanned sex and more than twice as likely to have unprotected sex.
http://www.madd.org/Professionals/Social-Host/Social-Host-Parent-Tips.aspx

The MSA Program has resulted in a 56% reduction of sexual consequences for Kent Co. HS students in the schools surveyed.
www.alertlabs.org/accomplishments.php/

About 90% of High School Teens Who Believe that their Parents DISAPPROVE of Underage Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Use Remain Abstinent

Nearly 100% of Kent County parents surveyed over the past four years have consistently reported that they disapprove of underage drinking. This past Spring, 98% of parents told us that they would be upset if their child came home and had been drinking (1.7% said they were "unsure"); 97% said they would be upset about marijuana use, 93% said the same for tobacco.

AOD abstinence figures for 2009, based on a composite of data from all MSA schools, show that many teens "heard" their parent. That, combined with their realization from the MSA Poster that most of their peer don't use AOD at all, led to great increases in abstaining. **Abstention in MSA schools has increased by more than 20% over the past three to four years**. Current figures for 2009 are well above State norms for Michigan- **except tobacco** - see information in parentheses:

- 70% of the students reported that they did not use alcohol (57% Do NOT Use),
- 80% reported they did not use marijuana (75% Do NOT Use)
- 77% reported they did not use tobacco, and (82% Do NOT Use).
- 93% that they did not illegally use other drugs (no State norms available).

Most of these same parents, **88%, said that they had talked with their kids about their disapproval**. The teens themselves said that they had talked with their parents almost that often, 82% for alcohol:

% of Students Who Report Talking to Their Parents

Substance	2009
Alcohol	82.0%
Marijuana	70.3%
Tobacco	74.8%

Notice, however, that not all teens remember talking to their parents about the three most commonly used drugs, nor have all teens done so. **Increased diligence among parents is crucial**. The more teens and parents talk to each other, the more likely it is that the percentage of students using these drugs will continue to decrease.

What Should Parents and Teens Say to Each Other About AOD? And When? Where? How Often? And How Do Parents Know if Teens Are or Are NOT Using?

Find Answers at Family Day on 9/29

On the last Tuesday in September, on 9/29 at 5:30 – 7:30, parents, teachers, teens, health and AOD prevention professionals will meet to identify **good answers** to these questions over a free **Family Day Dinner at John Ball Zoo Picnic Area**. *The Kent County Prevention Coalition*, sponsor of the MSA Project, is hosting the dinner in partnership with Network 180. Events will include live entertainment, face painting, arts and crafts, family games, and good ideas for **Family Table Talk**.

Researcher Decries Parental Permissiveness on Drinking, *06/24/2009*… parents who let teens drink alcohol may be setting their kids up for binge drinking in college.

Link Between Sweet Tooth and Alcoholism, … study participants with a family history of alcoholism were 2.5 times more likely to have a sweet tooth…. And those who have a sweet tooth are more than twice as likely to be genetically predisposed to develop an alcohol addiction. Kampov-Polevoy, A. (2003) Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research.

Nicotine Alters Brains of Young Smokers, esp. Males, which makes addiction more likely in adulthood. Nicotine breaks down nerve-cell membranes in the brains of young people, research shows, adding to evidence that nicotine addiction can be "hard-wired" at an early age, the Ivanhoe Newswire, October 2006.

What/Who is MSA? The MSA Project is Sponsored by the Kent County Prevention Coalition and Implemented by the ALERT Labs Group (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:"* ***alertlabs. org***

Unpleasant as it is to remember, teen AOD use is a life and death issue. But UNDERAGE USE is PREVENTABLE, and PARENT TALK is KEY. See you at the Zoo!

DID YOU KNOW?

What seems to work best for Parent/Teen Talk is: Private "just between us" conversations in which the parent listens as much as he/she talks. Good places for talks are while driving in the car, at dinner for two, at a special outing to shop or play miniature golf, etc. It is probably also wise to promise no retaliation for what may be said, e.g., no punishment. (But remember, getting help for your teen through the STARR Program is NOT punishment. STARR is free at MSA schools and available to others on a sliding scale): stevensgeffery@mei.net, or call 269-929-2333. See informational slide show at: **www.alertlabs.org/documents/CADCA_STARR_Program.ppt.**

Get more ideas at HablaConTusHijos.org, The Drug & Alcohol Scene, www.timetotalk.org/JoinTheTalk/ and back issues of the *Parents Are Heroes Newsletter* . See esp. www.alertlabs.org/documents/MSA_March_09_Newsletter.pdf .

There's a lot to learn about AOD and adolescents. See www.checkyourself.com/Quiz.aspx and recommend that your teen do the same.

It's important to MODEL responsible moderate drinking (if you drink) and make clear that alcohol is dangerous for teens, but can be safely used by healthy adults over age 21. See Dad's Drinking Predicts Teen Imbibing, Study Finds. "Safe" drinking for a healthy adult is less than 7 drinks per week for women (never more than one drink per day) and less than 14 drinks per week for men (never more than two drinks per day….

Nearly 40% of children of alcoholic fathers used alcohol last year as compared to about 20% of children of fathers who abstained. About 30% of children of fathers who drank moderately also drank. National research shows that 75% of Americans drink "safely" or not at all (40% abstained last year). National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA website.

Study: Same Genes May Underlie Alcohol And Nicotine Co-Abuse, Vulnerability to both alcohol and nicotine problems may be influenced by the same genetic factor, according to a March 2006 study supported by the NIAAA, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). ALSO, Nicotine exposure as a young child changes the brain and may lead to alcohol and other drug addictions. **These are two good reasons not to smoke around children.**

The first thing for a parent to do upon learning that a child is using tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs—whether or not it is because of a genetic predisposition--is to seek professional help, e.g., the STARR Program. Punishment, if appropriate, can come later.

The ALERT Labs Group*: Project Director, Nancy L. Harper, Ph.D., Dean of Social Sciences and Professor of Communication(ret.), Director, ALERT Labs Consulting; Project Coordinator, Shannon D. Welsh, M.Ed., Welsh Advertising; Project Evaluator, Donald (Tex)Bryant. M.S. & M.Ed., Bryant Healthcare Services, STARR Facilitator for screening and intervention, Geoffery L. Stevens, LMSW, Alternative Behavioral Health Services; Project Theatre Coordinator, Carla Jackson, Certified in Secondary Education, Media Instruction and Peer Listening /Mentoring.*