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# Parenting for Prevention

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Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, March, 2008

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## Impressive Week In D.C.

A few weeks ago, almost twenty Westchester County residents traveled to Washington, DC for the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) annual conference. These residents are involved with coalitions which address concerns about underage drinking and drug use.

While in Washington, we also met with aides from all the Westchester Congressional districts and both Senators. We let them know about the impressive work that is being done in our county to address concerns related to underage drinking and drug use. I would encourage all of you, if you have the opportunity, to keep the conversation going with them and other elected officials about this important issue.

One of the advantages of attending a conference like this is to see the concern and commitment that so many people in influential government positions have toward this problem.

We also received the latest information about current alcohol and drug use trends. Overall, the news is good, but it could be much better.

*Patricia Murphy Warble, Editor*

## Updates on Ups and Downs

*Newest Information on Drug Use and Trends*

It is always a positive experience to go to the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) conference in Washington, DC. It is energizing to experience the commitment of so many people to the issue of underage drinking and drug use. The conference also provides an opportunity to hear about the latest research, learn about new trends in drug usage and be educated about the newest initiatives that government and communities are using to address the problem.

There was good news this year. According to the Monitoring the Future survey that was released in December, 2007, eighth, tenth and twelfth graders across the country are continuing to show a gradual decline in the percent of young people reporting use of illicit drugs. Teen alcohol use has declined since the mid-1990s. The 30-day prevalence of alcohol use (reporting drinking an alcoholic beverage at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey) has fallen by 40 percent among 8th graders since their peak level in 1996. Proportionally, the declines since recent peak rates are smaller for the older students, however, there is about a one-fifth decline for 10th graders and about a one sixth decline for 12th graders.

However, the concerns about drug use this year were focused on the increased use of over-the-counter and prescription drugs by young people and the emergence of alcoholic energy drinks. This newsletter has written several articles about the use of over-the-counter and prescription drugs by young people but it certainly is worth repeating given the concern that was evident at this conference.

### **Over-the-counter and prescription drugs**

The concern about the use of over-the-counter and prescription drugs by young people has emerged in the past few years. Most stores that sell cough, cold and flu medication have moved them to behind the counter and anyone purchasing those products is asked to show identification and sign a paper. The reason for this change is concern about teens using products that contain dextromethorphan (DXM) which when taken in excess can produce a high or cause psychoactive effects. According to Parents, The Anti-Drug website many emergency rooms across the country are seeing increased numbers of teens who

are using the over-the-counter cough and flu preparations that contain DXM.

But DXM is not the only concern. Medications for asthma and Attention Deficit Disorder are sometimes taken by young people without a prescription because they think these drugs will help them study for longer periods. Some cough and cold medications with “non-drowsy” medications are also used for the stimulant effect. Young people may also use products to relax them. These include sleep aids such as Ambien and Nyquill and anti-anxiety drugs such as Xanax or Valium.

All of these prescription and over-the-counter medications come with the threat of serious consequences. There is the immediate risk of harm that can happen when a young person is intoxicated including car crashes, falls and other accidents, unhealthy risk taking, and the stress placed on the body.

In addition, some of the cough and cold medicines contain chemicals that, when taken in large amounts, can cause liver or kidney failure even days after ingestion. For this reason, all over-the-counter drug abuse must be seen as a potential poisoning situation. Many of these drugs and preparations are particularly dangerous when combined with alcohol, a not uncommon practice.

When most of us think about someone taking a “drug,” one thinks of going to a dangerous neighborhood and slipping money

to a drug dealer waiting on a corner in exchange for some pills.

However, one of the most important points that was reiterated over and over again at the conference was that in reality most teens acquire over-the-counter and prescription drugs from a medicine cabinet, on the Internet or from their friends.

- **Medicine cabinets:** Teens get drugs from various medicine cabinets. It could be at their home, at a relatives, at the home of a friend, or even at a home where they baby sit.
- **Internet:** Anyone with a computer and credit card can get a prescription filled online even if they never see a doctor or get a written prescription. Internet pharmacies are called “pill mills” and dispense pills for profit, not pain.
- **Friends:** Young people sell or share their drugs with others. Sometimes students will buy Ritalin or Adderall from a friend to help them study for an important test or to finish a paper.

### What Parents Can Do

First and foremost, talk to your children. Let them know that you oppose all illicit drug, prescription and over-the-counter drug use for non-medical reasons. When talking to younger children, stress the importance of poison control. Remind them that all medicine (prescribed or over-the-counter) should be used only under the direction of a doctor or other responsible adult.

- Take an inventory of your home and keep prescription and over-the-counter drugs in a secure place.
- Maintain an accurate count of the number of pills in a bottle by writing the number of pills on the side of the bottle.
- Draw a line on liquid medications to make sure they are not being taken.
- Make sure that the color of the liquid medication has not changed as teens have been known to take cough syrup or other liquid medication and then fill the bottle with water or juice.
- If your child is on medication check their supply to make sure that they are not giving it or selling it to others.
- If you visit family or friends ask them to put their medications in a safe place. Grandparents may have pain medications, sleeping pills, cough syrups and other medications readily available in their homes.
- Be aware of the websites that your children visit on the Internet. Get the information from your computer manufacturer so that you can track where your children are going. Let your children know that you will be tracking the sites that they are visiting. Also, make sure you know about any purchases that your child is making online and know what is being mailed to your home. The online sites selling drugs use misleading language in their charges on a credit card and their packaging so that parents would not know they were selling drugs.

- According to many of the professionals at the CADCA conference, unused prescriptions of adults are one of the most common sources for teens to get drugs. Parents may get a prescription for a medical procedure, take a few pills and then forget that they have them. Discard all unused prescriptions in an environmentally safe way. The best way to do this is to take unused prescriptions back to your pharmacy. Do not throw them down any drain as they then can leach into the water supply.

### Alcohol Energy Drinks

One of the other issues that received attention at the CADCA conference was the increasing popularity of alcoholic energy drinks.

The names of the most popular drinks are:

- **Sparks**



- **TILT and TILT 8.0%** which are made by Anheuser-Busch. Tilt 8.0% is described as “the perfect balance of tart and sweet. This carbonated beverage has a bold citrus flavor and a bright green color. Brewed with select barley malt, natural grains, hops, yeast and water, TILT 8.0% is infused with lemon-lime flavor, caffeine, guarana and ginseng.”



- **Rockstar 21:** This drink is made by the same company that makes a drink called Rockstar which is not alcoholic. However, the drinks are usually displayed next

to each other in the store and are easily confused.



Overall, the energy drink market is targeted to youth. According to the Mintel Research Group, 31% of 12 to 17-year olds are regular consumers vs 22 % of the 25 to 34-year olds. One in three teens is likely to use energy drinks compared to one in ten adults.

One of the reasons that there is so much concern about these drinks is that teens who are already buying energy drinks will be easily attracted to the drinks with alcohol in them.

Some of the concerns that were expressed in terms of how these drinks are marketed to young people are as follows:

- There is, what is known in the industry as “brand confusion,” when it comes to these alcoholic drinks. They look like other energy drinks but contain alcohol. That confusion normalizes a drink that is dangerous and illegal for young people to purchase.
- Furthermore, there is confusion in the stores where alcoholic energy drinks are frequently sold, like gas stations and quick markets, about the fact that they contain alcohol. As a result, teens are frequently not asked for identification to prove that they are over 21. That makes it easier for teens to get alcohol.

- In general, these drinks are carbonated and taste very sweet. This masks the taste of alcohol which many teens do not like.
- The packing of these drinks is very attractive and is thought to appeal to a teenager.
- They are marketed as high energy and athletic-enhancing drinks which makes them attractive to teens.
- If you go to the website of one of the drinks, Sparks, [www.sparks.com](http://www.sparks.com), the website looks like the room of a teenager. One could deduce from that, that the site is targeting a teen.
- Most adults do not even know that these drinks exist so if they see their teens with one, they would most likely assume that it was an energy drink, not an energy drink with alcohol in it.

In addition to these concerns there are also the negative health aspects of drinking a lot of caffeine and drinking a combination of caffeine and alcohol.

- The combination of caffeine and carbonation gets the alcohol into the bloodstream faster.
- The caffeine keeps people awake which allows them to drink more.
- These drinks provide a false sense of sobriety.

### Upcoming Events

**March 25** **10:00am**  
Katonah Village Library  
Bullyproofing Your Child  
Joel Haber, PhD  
Contact: 234-3227

**March 26** **7:30 pm**  
Briarcliff MS Theater  
Freedom from Chemical Depend-  
ency (FCD)  
Parent Presentation  
Contact: 914.769.6299 ext. 334

**March 27** **6pm**  
Hendrick Hudson High School  
*Family Academy/*  
Contact: 788-0337

**March 31st** **7:30pm**  
Bell Auditorium, Chappaqua  
Risk & Protective Factors in Af-  
fluent Communities  
Sunya Luthar, PhD  
Contact: 238-0907

**April 1** **7pm**  
Ossining High School  
Safe Driving Night  
David Reese, Michael Poveromo  
Contact: 762-5760 x325

**April 3rd** **7 pm**  
Eastchester HS Auditorium  
*Parents Who Host, Lose the  
Most: Don't be a Party to Teen-  
age Drinking*  
Honorable Janet DiFiore, West-  
chester County District Attor-  
ney, Ellen Morehouse, Chief  
Tim Bonci, PD, Carlos Flores,  
MD. Director of E R at Law-  
rence Hospital and Supervisor  
Anthony Colavito.  
Contact:  
admin@EastchesterCTC.org

**April 8** **7-9 pm**  
Yorktown Jewish Center - Route  
202  
*All You Wanted to Know About  
Substance Abuse  
But Didn't Know Who To ASK*  
Michael Nerney, Presenter  
Contact: 245-3507

**April 10** **7:30 pm**  
Briarcliff MS Theater  
*Parents Who Host Lose the Most  
Panel*  
Honorable Janet DiFiore, West-  
chester County District Attorney  
Contact: 914-769-6299 ext. 334

**April 11** **9:30am-2pm**  
Katonah Village Library  
*The Deep River Within*  
Abby Seixas  
Contact: 234-3227

**April 14** **7-9pm**  
Westchester County Center  
*High Cost of College*  
Andrew Cuomo, NYS Attorney  
General  
Contact: 995-2913

**April 15** **7pm**  
Harrison High School  
*10 Seconds Can Change Your Life*  
Bobby Petrocelli  
Contact: 630-3145



Indian Proverbs from  
the Native American  
Museum in Washington  
DC

*You should water your  
children like you water  
a tree.*

*Talk to your children  
while they are eating;  
what you say will stay  
even after you are gone.*

