
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, September, 2011

Off and Running



Well it has been an interesting summer. First rain, then heat,

an earthquake, hail storms and most recently, a hurricane. I hope everyone is okay after this challenging time and that everyone is ready to turn their attention to prevention plans for the 2011-12 year.

One of the questions that I am frequently asked is “What are the substance abuse prevention coalitions doing in the county? My answer usually is, “There are so many wonderful things going on that it is hard to list them all, but I will try.” And then I start to list the many activities that are being implemented in the county. To begin this year, I am highlighting some of those projects. My intention is to also show how one initiative can become the catalyst for many other good things to happen within a community.

I like the analogy of throwing pebbles into the pond. We never know exactly the effect of our good works and who or what they are impacting, but be assured those ripples are going out there and creating positive results in your community. Good luck to all for a successful year.

Patricia Murphy Warble, MSW, CPP

Coalition Initiatives

Making a Difference in the Community

There are over twenty active community or school-based substance abuse prevention coalitions in Westchester County dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of young people using alcohol or other drugs. A benefit of having an active coalition in a community is their ability to make connections and network with the various sectors in the community to get everyone focused on making the community a safer place for all citizens. Some of the activities that coalitions were involved in during the past year illustrates this synergy.

Prescription Drug Prevention Initiative

Three years ago, the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth, began an initiative with pharmacies located in Westchester County to distribute a pamphlet during the summer about the dangers associated with teen prescription drug use. Many coalition members supported this endeavor by making an initial contact with their local pharmacies and asked them to be part of this project. As a result, 80 pharmacies participated in this year’s initiative. In the past three years 20,000 pamphlets about teen prescription drug use have been distributed throughout the county.

In addition to being involved in this project, many coalition members began to understand that giving an informative pamphlet was a first step to raising the awareness about the dangers of prescription drug use and to change the community norm about these drugs. Coalition members also became concerned about having extra prescription drugs left in medicine cabinets. As a result, many coalitions have begun to work with their local hospitals and members of law enforcement to participate in National Prescription Take-Back Days. A national take-back day is scheduled for October 29, 2011 and many coalitions will be participating and identifying drop-off areas throughout the county. This is a very worthwhile endeavor, it removes the danger of having drugs available in a home and disposes them in a safe and ecologically responsible manner.

The Westchester Coalition for Alcohol and Drug Free Youth also sent letters this spring to medical personnel that included orthopedists, sports medicine doctors, and oral surgeons. The letter asked the doctors and dentists to be sensitive to the issue of teen prescription drug use and suggested they explore other ways to treat pain besides narcotics. In addition, the letter suggested that the medical professionals restrict the number of pills they prescribe. Many coalitions are following up with their local medical professionals to amplify this message.

TIPS ((Training for Intervention Procedures)

TIPS (Training for Intervention Procedures) is the global leader in education and training for the responsible service, sale and consumption of alcohol. Proven effective by third-party studies, TIPS is a skills based training program for sellers, servers, or consumers and is designed to prevent intoxication, underage drinking, and drunk driving. Many coalitions, working with their local merchants, clubs, restaurants, and law enforcement officials, have held TIPS training for their beverage servers and/or sellers.

Another aspect of the awareness that occurs from an initiative like this is that a community becomes more proactive in regards to merchants selling alcohol in their community. Many coalitions begin to work with their law enforcement members and they schedule ongoing compliance checks to make sure the stores, bodegas, delicatessens, convenience stores, and restaurants are checking identifications and are not selling alcohol to underage persons. In fact, in many communities, students from Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and other school-based prevention committees have been working side-by-side with police officers by participating in the compliance checks. The students go into a store and try to buy alcohol even though they are underage.

On-going compliance checks are a very effective environmental prevention strategy to reduce the availability of alcohol in a community. For more information regarding holding a TIPS training in your community, contact Ann Marie Linden, a certified TIPS trainer at 914-332-1300. (Environmental strategies focus on the availability of alcohol.)

Media Prevention Campaigns

Many Westchester coalitions have used very effective media campaigns to highlight messages about the dangers of alcohol and other drug use by teens. Bruce Kelly, the director of New Rochelle FOCUS and Stephanie Perez, the director of the Cortlandt Coalition have collaborated with students to make several public service announcements (PSA). A New Rochelle PSA called *I Walk Alone*, shows a student leaving a house party where alcohol is being consumed. Once the student leaves, the video then shows many other

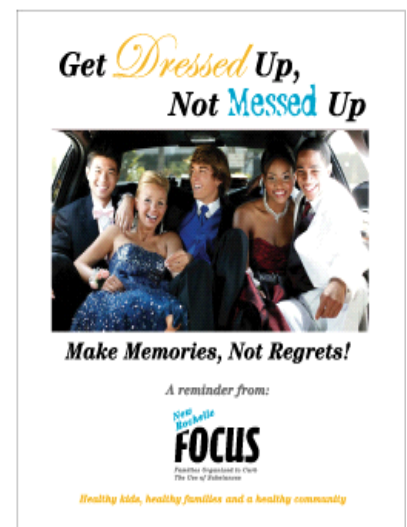
students following him and leaving the party. Go to <http://nrfocus.org/2010/10/walk-alone/> to see the PSA.

In addition, the New Rochelle coalition has posters with prevention messages on billboards, at train kiosks, bus shelters and at the New Roc parking garage.

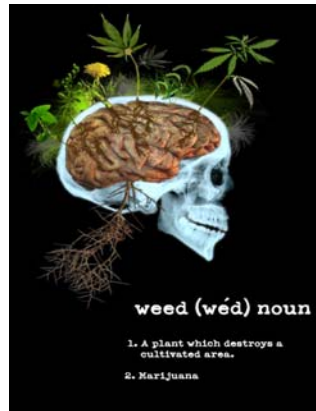
One media campaign encourages parents to *Be A Parent, Not A Friend*, suggesting that parents should set boundaries for their children about alcohol and drug use.



Another campaign done this spring was directed towards keeping students safe during prom and graduation.



New Rochelle FOCUS also did two prevention posters about marijuana that are on billboards in New Rochelle.



The Cortlandt Community Coalition does a media prevention campaign that has one message that is disseminated throughout the community. They put a poster on bus kiosks and then the poster is sent to parents by the school district using e-mail blasts.

Stephanie Perez, the coordinator of the Cortlandt coalition says that she uses the free photo editing program GIMP to do the posters. The photos are usually ones found online that do not have copyrights. The posters are then sent to the IT department at the schools who attach them to other emails the schools send out.

Their current campaign encourages parents to talk to their children about drugs and alcohol.



Another one of their successful campaigns advises parents to know what their children are doing and who they are with before they leave the house.



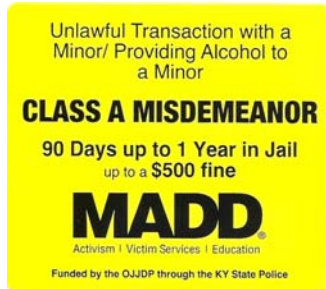
Mapping Initiatives

Research shows that there is a connection between availability of alcohol and use of alcohol in a community. New tools are available on the Internet to help coalitions “map” the number of establishments that are selling alcohol in a community. Several coalitions have spent the summer mapping these locations and report that they are surprised by the number of places that sell alcohol within their community. Over the summer that number has increased because stores like CVS are now allowed to sell beer and beverages described as “alcopops.”

“Mapping” a community has many advantages. First, it gives a very clear precise picture of the actual availability of alcohol in a community. This is useful information that can persuade sectors of the community to become more proactive in regards to addressing the amount of alcohol that is available in a community. For instance, law enforcement may be more willing to hold frequent compliance checks. The New Rochelle FOCUS coalition has a campaign that asks establishments that sell alcohol to check two identifications not just one.

Mapping a community would be very helpful in order to do an initiative called “Sticker Shock.” Janet Buchbinder from the Larchmont/Mamaroneck coalition reported that law enforcement, a social worker and SADD students at the high school have been promoting this campaign in their area. This is an awareness project to give information about laws surrounding underage drinking.

Stickers are designed and then placed on packages of alcohol and on the doors of refrigeration units indicating that it is illegal for adults to purchase alcohol for minors.



Policy Initiatives

Alcopops

- Since the Westchester Coalition began eight years ago, many members have been involved in raising awareness with public officials at both the state and federal level. There have been yearly visits to elected officials in Washington, DC during the annual trip to the CADCA conference in February.
- Jay Genova and the Eastchester Communities That Cares coalition has been in

touch with State Senator Jeffrey Klein to give him information about youth and alcopops. Even though most of these drinks have distilled spirits in them, the alcohol industry claims they are made from beer so that they could be taxed at a lower rate, sold in convenience stores, and advertised on television.

- There is currently legislation being considered in many states including New York regarding these beverages. The legislation includes a bill to reclassify alcopops as distilled spirits, to ban the sale of flavored malt beverages over 12 oz., and to tax these beverages at a higher rate that is consistent with the taxes levied on other distilled spirits all in an attempt to reduce use by youth.
- Legislation has already been enacted that restricted the addition of caffeine in these drinks.

Alcohol.edu

- Alcohol.edu is an online alcohol education program for high school students. Several coalitions have funded this

program so that it is available to the students in their school district.

- Policies differ from school to school but some schools require all tenth grade students to take the course as part of the health curriculum. Other schools require anyone who participates on a school-sponsored athletic team to take the course.

Policies for Selling Alcohol

- Some coalitions have engaged the business community and asked them to comply with positive prevention practices as it applies to selling alcohol. If an establishment agrees to adopt these practices they make sure that their employees are trained to check identification and perhaps even ask for two kinds of identifications, especially if a form of identification is from out-of-state.
- Secondly, law enforcement may do compliance checks to make sure that the prevention practices are being observed. Officers can enlist students from the SADD club to help them carryout the compliance checks.