

asac action

April 2009

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April is Alcohol Awareness Month

While communities are faced with a number of substance abuse issues, underage drinking continues to be among the most pervasive ones, with nearly 11 million underage drinkers today. That's why April is designated as Alcohol Awareness Month - an annual public awareness campaign that encourages local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, about 10.7 million persons aged 12 to 20 (27.9 percent of this age group) reported drinking alcohol in the past month. Approximately 7.2 million or 18.6 percent were considered binge drinkers, and 2.3 million or 6 percent were heavy drinkers. There are a number of free resources available to help parents, educators, prevention providers and coalitions in their underage drinking prevention efforts. Here are a few:

www.timetotalk.org/parentsyoumatter - Time to Talk provides tools to help parents engage in a dialogue with their teens.

www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov - Too Smart to Start for parents and their pre-teen.

www.alcoholfreechildren.org - Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free addresses underage drinking prevention focusing on children ages 9 to 15.

www.higheredcenter.org/services/audiences/parents - Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention: The Parent Connection provides information for parents of college bound students to keep students safe and healthy

www.stopalcoholabuse.gov - A comprehensive portal of Federal resources for information on underage drinking and ideas for combating this issue. People interested in underage drinking prevention—including parents, educators, community-based organizations, and youth—will find a wealth of valuable information here.

www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/CollegeParents - offers important information and resources on alcoholism and substance abuse for college students, parents of college students, high school parents and students.

www.family.samhsa.gov/get/grandparent.aspx - Article, *Building a Grand Relationship Help Keeps Youth Drug Free*, highlights how grandparents can make an important contribution to the lives of their grandchildren .

www.drugfreeinfo.org/grandparent.pdf - *The Power of a Grandparent* brochure from Partnership for a Drug-Free Iowa

Heart of Iowa Needs

Legos, computer games, craft items, dress-up clothes, books, basketballs, soccer balls, footballs, 8" and 10" rubber balls, bats, roller blades and skates, plastic lawn furniture, hula hoops, jump ropes and sand trucks.

Please call Heart of Iowa at 862-1050 if you have items to donate

Be Aware of the Culture You Are Creating

By Jaimen Pangborn, Prevention Specialist

Alcohol is a product that has provided a variety of functions for people throughout history. Today it is used as a social lubricant, facilitates relaxation, adds flavor to meals, and plays an important role in many religions. Historically, alcoholic beverages served as a source of needed nutrients and were widely used for medicinal purposes, antiseptic, and analgesic properties. But when is the line crossed? At what point does enjoying a glass of wine or a beer with friends turn into a dangerous evening sometimes ending with tragic results?

In the words of the founding Director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, "... alcohol has existed longer than all human memory. It has outlived generations, nations, epochs and ages. It is a part of us, and that is fortunate indeed. For although alcohol will always be the master of some, for most of us it will continue to be the servant of man" (Chafetz, 1965, p. 223). Although this may have been the case in 1965 when this statement was made, currently underage drinking is one of the leading health problems in the country and approximately 13.8 million Americans age 18 and older (7% of the populations) are problem drinkers. (Zimba, 2009)

Very few individuals hold the knowledge that alcohol's long term consequences include damage to your liver, brain, heart, nerves, and pancreas. That one "drink" is supposed to equal 1.5 oz. of 80 proof liquor, 5 oz. of wine or 12 oz. of beer or wine cooler. Binge drinking is defined as 5 or more drinks for males or over 4 for females in one sitting or evening and currently 75% of drinking in the U.S. falls in the category of binge drinking.

It is no wonder that according to the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) in 2005, underage drinking cost the citizens of Iowa \$582 million. These costs include youth violence, traffic crashes, high-risk sex, property crime, injury, poisonings and psychoses, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome among mothers age 15-20, and alcohol treatment. Adults in Iowa are struggling as much as the youth are. In an article written by Narconon Arrowhead Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center they stated that in 2005 Iowa statistics show that an estimated 218,000 individuals had an alcohol abuse or dependence problem and an estimated 209,000 individuals in Iowa needed alcohol rehab treatment but did not receive it.

In its history alcohol was used for enjoyment as well as for a variety of other purposes. In years past it has become a substance that when used correctly and safely can be enjoyed with friends and family but the current culture being created around it now is an atmosphere designed for tragedy and disappointment. April is Alcohol Awareness Month and I encourage you this April to examine your alcohol habits and determine if you need to redesign the culture in your own life to promote a healthier life-style for yourself, set examples for youth and adults around you and help the citizens of Iowa work towards creating a safe and healthy environment.

For more information please contact ASAC Prevention Services at 319-390-1884.

Preventing Tragedy at Prom

By Erin Gavin

Certified Prevention Specialist

"What dress do I wear?"

"Who should I ask to go with me?"

"How am I going to afford this?"

The answers to these questions may come along easily to some but the question of whether or not to drink this prom season may be a bit more difficult for some students. Making the decision to stay sober may come easy to some, but far too many students will make the wrong decision.

Each year across the United States, hundreds of teens are killed or injured in alcohol-related accidents connected with their prom night activities. Many community efforts are around to remind everyone to be safe around prom, but the most effective way to prevent an accident of occurring in your family is to be involved in your child's life during this excited time of year.

First, talk to your teen about the dangers of underage drinking. Having a simple discussion about consequences could potentially be the deal maker in your child's mind about whether or not to drink. After talking with your child, continue to be an active listener. Find out your child's plan for prom night. Know who is driving. If a group of teens are renting a limo, find out about the limo company's policies on allowing minors to drink. Know the other teens your child is going with. Go beyond knowing the other teens, and get to know the other teens' parents as well. Finally, talk to your teen when he or she returns home. Seeing that they made it home safely and hearing that they had a good time will make any parent rest a bit easier.

Prom night is an exciting night for many high school students; however, one bad decision can turn a magical night tragic. Help your teen make a good decision this prom season.