



Prevention WORKS!

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, INC.

Providing Substance Abuse Prevention, Education, and Support for Personal Recovery!

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Wake-up Call: Alcohol Awareness Month 2011



A Proud Affiliate of the



Wake-up Call: Alcohol Awareness Month 2011

By Judy Shepps Battle, M.A.

Since the first designated Alcohol Awareness Month in 1987, the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (NCADD) has sponsored the program every April and has made impressive progress in educating our kids – and their parents – about the dangers of alcohol experimentation. This program's work, however, is far from complete.

Kids still drink at an alarming rate – alcohol remains the number one drug of choice of our kids. Kids still drink, despite their sitting through required health classes that document the negative effects of beer and hard liquor. They still drink, despite warnings that academic performance may be compromised, and they may do "stupid things" while under the influence. And when they drink, they play Russian roulette with their future.

Mind, Body and Spirit

Alcohol consumption abuses the still-developing brain, body and sensibility of an adolescent. It impairs thinking, scrambles priorities, lowers inhibition, and encourages risky behavior.

Underage alcohol use is associated with educational failure, suicide, traffic fatalities, unsafe sex, violence, and other problem behaviors that diminish the prospects of future success, as well as increasing health risks. The sad facts – as reported by the University of Michigan and by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are:

- Approximately 7,000 young people under age 16 begin drinking alcohol each day.
- Nearly three out of every four students have consumed alcohol (more than just a few sips) by the end of high

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Dear Friends,

I am not sure I have looked forward to spring as much as I have this year. Between the weather, the ever-growing stress load, and the amount I have fallen behind, listening to the robins for the past few days has been truly uplifting.

I mention that my stress level has been a bit out of control lately, because I can't tell you how many people have told me that I just need to have a drink and relax. With April serving as Alcohol Awareness Month, it seemed an appropriate thing to share. As a person who is not alcoholic, I do enjoy a glass of wine two or three times a month. I can also see the lure of having more than a glass - more than occasionally! However, this is a trap that has caught too many people unaware. What starts out as a way to relax a little after a hectic day can all too easily turn into a routine coping skill.

The problem is that drinking isn't a true coping skill. It does nothing to address the stressors at all. As early as in our elementary school programs, we teach the importance of finding coping skills we can use when faced with difficult situations. A true coping skill provides us with a constructive outlet for stress and enables us to work through the issue at hand. Drinking feels good, in that it takes our mind off our problems, but the problems remain to be dealt with.

This month is a perfect time to reflect on our own coping skills, as stress seems to be on the rise everywhere. There was a time when youth snuck a drink to be cool or taste the forbidden fruit. Now, too many youth are drinking, because they do not know how to cope with their stress. We need to be their role models related to stress management. In this case, telling youth not to drink will not be nearly as effective as demonstrating our own healthy coping skills in the face of life's stressors.

I think now would be a great time for me to head outside with my axe. There is a pile of wood that has been staring at me from under a soggy wet blanket of rain and snow throughout the winter. Rolling up my sleeves, working up a sweat, and watching a pile of logs disappear amid the sounds of robins and the scent of lilacs should make me so much better.



Steven G. Liga, CEO/Executive Director

PS We need your support now more than ever. Please see the back cover of this newsletter to see how you can help.

Wake-Up Call ... Continued from Page 1

school; about two-fifths have done so by 8th grade.

- More than half of the 12th graders and one-fifth of the 8th graders report having been drunk at least once in their life.
- Nearly half of drug-related hospital emergency department visits among patients aged 12 to 20 involved alcohol.

It is also true that the earlier teens start drinking, the greater the danger of serious consequences. One government study projects that 4 of 10 children who begin drinking before age 15 will exhibit alcoholic behavior at some point in their lives.

And, most sadly, the media continues to make drinking look attractive to youth of all ages. Most teenagers find that alcohol is easily accessible – in fact, it’s the drug most easily available for consumption.

The above are not just “interesting” national statistics.

Carl

They represent individual kids – kids like Carl, a high school sophomore and member of the football team, who enjoys being with his friends on the weekend and dismisses adult concerns about alcohol consumption as “overreacting.”

“All we drink is beer,” he says. “And when I have a buzz on, everything looks like fun. We laugh a lot, and I suppose some people have unprotected sex when they are drinking, but I don’t and that’s what counts. I did ride home

on my bike one night and crashed into a street light, but I wasn’t really hurt.”

How many “Carl’s” – and his female counterparts – do you know?

Helping Kids Make Better Choices

The challenge of Alcohol Awareness Month is for local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues, so that kids are encouraged to make better choices with regard to peer pressure to consume alcohol.

Check out the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website at <http://www.samhsa.gov/FBCI/fbc.aspx>, and read about programs that communities like yours have implemented to help kids grow into responsible and vigorous young adults.



And above all, remember that Alcohol Awareness Month doesn’t have to be just an April event. It can begin and thrive at any time of the year when two or more people gather to honor and support health.

Judy Shepps Battle is a New Jersey resident, addictions specialist, consultant and freelance writer. She can be reached by e-mail at writeaction@aol.com. Additional information on this and other topics can be found at her website at <http://www.writeaction.com/>.

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Energy Drinks and Alcohol, A Dangerous Mix

By Antony Thottukadavil

For generations, people have relied on caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea, and soda to wake them up and keep them up. For some people, the first thing that they reach for in the morning after their toothbrush is that cup of coffee to get their day started. With the emergence of energy drinks, many people are choosing them instead. Their advertisements and variety of drink choices have made them very popular, especially among youth. This popularity has spawned a new and dangerous practice of combining energy drinks with alcohol. Energy drink and alcohol combinations have actually become a part of the partying subculture and are especially prevalent on college campuses.

Alcohol acts as a depressant on the body and slows down heart rate. Caffeine acts as a stimulant and increases heart rate. By combining the two you are sending mixed messages to your nervous system which can cause cardiac problems such as heart palpitations. This can be very dangerous and may pose a serious harm to an individual's health.

The issue of alcohol and energy drink mixes has come into the spotlight with the emergence of premade alcohol and energy drinks combinations such as Four Loko. Four Loko is a drink

that recently became extremely popular among youth, especially college students. It has been linked to several arrests and alcohol-related incidents on college campuses across the country. One can of Four Loko is 23.5 fl oz. and at 12% alcohol by volume, contains the same amount of alcohol as six beers, as well as almost the same amount

them unsafe and requiring them to be pulled off the shelves. Four Loko has since changed the recipe for their drinks, and they no longer contain caffeine and other stimulants.

The FDA ban on the sale of the original Four Loko was the first step in creating public awareness of the dangers of mixing energy drinks and alcohol.

Despite the ruling that caffeine is an unsafe additive to alcoholic beverages, the message has not reached many people who continue to create their own energy drink cocktails. This poses a danger to the health of the individuals doing it, as well as to the people around them. While it will not be any time soon that energy drinks are pulled off the market,

this problem can be addressed by people taking responsibility for their own actions and health by not combining alcohol and energy drinks.

More information is available through the non-profit Marin Institute's website at <http://www.marininstitute.org>. They monitor and expose the alcohol industry's harmful actions related to products, promotions and social influence, and support communities in their efforts to reject these damaging activities.

of caffeine as four cans of soda. Because all of this is contained in one can, a person may think that they are having one drink when, in fact, they are having 6-along with a large dose of caffeine. This has caused students all over the U.S. to over drink because they are not aware of how much they are actually drinking. Four Loko has actually been labeled by the college community as a "blackout in a can."

In November of 2010, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) placed a ban on Four Loko and other drinks like it, deeming

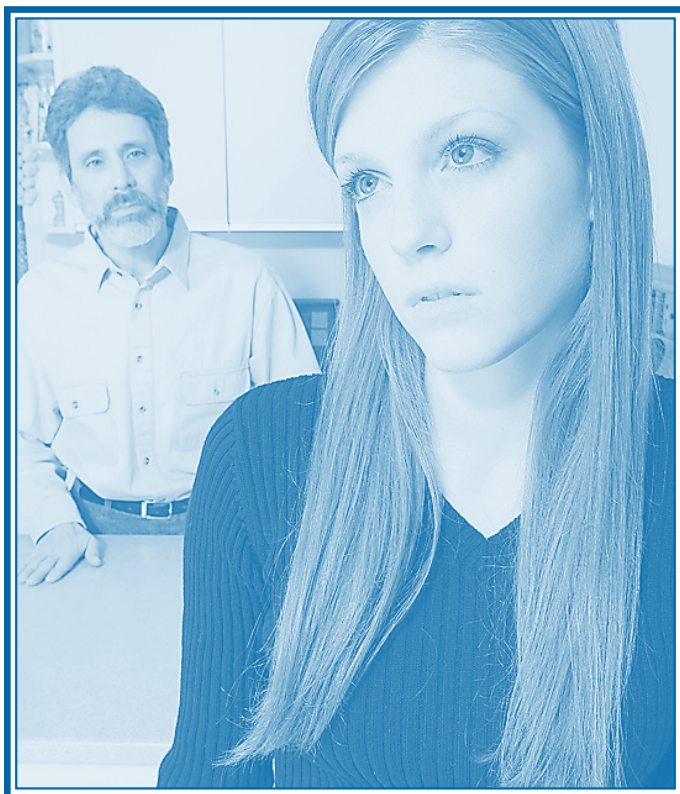


Having “The Talk” With Teens

Almost every parent and teenager knows about and dreads “the talk”.

“The talk” is when a parent tries to have a conversation with their child about sex. This can often be a very awkward and uncomfortable conversation for both parent and child. Most parents have no idea when they should have this talk with their kids or how to go about it. Instead, many choose to avoid it. When their parents don’t speaking to them about the topic, kids instead learn from other sources such as friends, music, television, and the internet.

This same issue exists when it comes to alcohol use. Avoidance of the issue and delaying conversations will force the child to learn from other sources, as well as through their own experimentation. This experimentation can be very dangerous and can cause a myriad of problems in the future.



Proactive parents who are involved in their children’s lives, and don’t shy away from tough topics such as alcohol use, can help prevent these future problems.

The prevailing belief held by many parents is that they should talk to their kids about drugs and alcohol when they get to high school, because that is where their kids will be exposed to it. This is actually not true.

In fact, 20% of 8th grade students report having been drunk at least once in their lives. The best advice for parents when talking to their kids about these issues is to talk about it before it becomes an issue.

Another common mistake that parents make when talking to their kids about alcohol is to offer the overly simplistic “alcohol is bad so don’t do it” message. This can often do more harm than good. If kids hear this, but then witness a parent or family member drinking alcohol, it can create confusion and a mixed message.

Instead, parents should seek to provide their children with knowledge about alcohol. Speaking to children about the facts such as alcohol’s effect on the body, addiction, and deaths caused by alcohol can actually have a much greater impact. The key to helping your child make good decisions is to be honest, loving, patient, and trusting.

Some tips for talking to your children:

- Encourage conversation- Encourage your child to talk about their interests and allow them to teach you something. With the doors to communication open, talking about more serious topics will be easier and less

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ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, featuring the participation of local organizations, schools, and communities. These groups have joined together to focus on the problem of underage drinking and alcohol abuse. The following announcements give details of various events taking place throughout the county. NCADD encourages groups across the county to join us by planning community events to raise awareness of the social, economic, and health costs of underage drinking and alcohol abuse.

- **March 28:** East Brunswick Township, Council Meeting and reading of Alcohol Awareness Month Proclamation, Municipal Building, 8 p.m.
- **March 31:** NCADD's 2011 Legislative Event at the Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center, 178 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. The event will focus on policy – how to get involved, how to identify policy issues that relate to addiction prevention, how to get the community involved, how to create passion around an issue, how to arrive at an end-result that meets the needs of the community, and more.
- **March 31 and every Thursday:** Pathways, Carteret High School, *Girl Talk* meeting at 2:30 p.m.
- **April 5:** PATHWAYS at Carteret High School, “*Under the Influence*” assembly for students, 1 p.m.
- **April 8:** Rutgers University's *Alcohol Month Kickoff Event*. Bishop Beach/Darien Quad at College Avenue Campus. From 2p.m. to 6 p.m.
- **April 13:** Planned Parenthood of Central New Jersey, Teen Conference. Dating abuse prevention, healthy decision-making, and body image are only a few of the crucial topics that New Jersey teens will discuss during the Conference. Brookdale Community College. 9a.m.-2p.m.
- **April 13:** Coalition for Healthy Communities, monthly meeting at NCADD of Middlesex County, 5 p.m.
- **April 13:** East Brunswick Alliance for the Prevention of Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Monthly Meeting, East Brunswick Recreation Building, Dunhams Corner Road, 7:30 p.m.
- **April 20:** Professional certification training “*Addiction Recovery: 12 Steps and Healing*”, Middlesex County Fire Academy, Sayreville, 9 a.m - 4 p.m. Call NCADD at 732-254-3344 for registration information.
- **April 14:** NCADD's *Alcohol Awareness Month: Town Hall Meeting*. Perth Amboy Community Center, 1 Olive Street, Perth Amboy, NJ 08861. Call NCADD at 732-254-3344 for more information.
- **April 21:** Edison Job Corps Academy, Alcohol Awareness Poster Contest, Gymnasium, 6:30 p.m. For more information, contact David Taylor at 732-985-4800 ext. 2203
- **April 27:** Level One Trauma Center, RWJUH, Lunch & Learn for staff focusing on Underage Drinking, Auditorium, 12 noon – 1 p.m. For more information, contact Diana Starace at 732-418-8026.

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uncomfortable for you and your children.

- Ask open ended questions- The key is to not ask questions that can have a yes or no answer. This allows your child to express how they feel about a particular issue and prevents a conversation from turning into a lecture.
- Control your emotions- If you hear something that you don't like, try not to respond with anger, because this can discourage your child from being open and honest with you in the future. Instead, respond in a constructive manner that will address the issue without closing the lines of communication.

Something as simple as a conversation can change the course of a child's life, so speak to your kids today.

By Antony Thottukadavil

NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit community-based health organization serving Middlesex County. Our mission is to promote the health and well-being of individuals and communities of Middlesex County through the reduction or elimination of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use problems.

NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc.
 152 Tices Lane
 East Brunswick, NJ 08816
 Phone: 732-254-3344
 Email: mail@ncadd-middlesex.org
 Web: www.ncadd-middlesex.org

Jason Surks Memorial Prevention Resource Center

Through its Jason Surks Memorial Resource Center, NCADD provides brochures and videos that deal with the various alcohol and drug use and abuse. For free brochures or more information, contact us today at: 732-254-3344. We also deliver in-person presentations to community organizations and area schools on topics ranging from the basics of addiction, to bullying to prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse. Call us for more information and to arrange for a presentation at your facility.

Below we are highlighting a couple of items that might be useful to you on the topics of alcohol abuse and the underage population.

Videos

- ✦ **Alcohol and Your Body** - This video and print material reveals the latest information on the many ways that drinking alcohol can damage bodily systems and cause disease. Leading doctors and researchers demonstrate new facts about alcohol absorption and the effects of alcohol on the brain, the liver, the digestive system, and the immune system.



Pamphlets

- ✦ **Make a Difference: Talk To Your Child About Alcohol**
 – This guide is written for parents of children ages 10-14, providing practical advice on why and how to talk to youth about alcohol.



Help Us Continue To Provide Services While You Support Your Community

NCADD is proud of our many achievements and the fact that we have been in the forefront of efforts to stamp out the stigma associated with addiction and to marshal the energy and resources to confront a public health problem that has maimed and killed more Americans than all of our wars, natural catastrophes, and traffic accidents combined. We plan to maintain our commitment to prevention, education and advocacy efforts in the communities we serve. We would like to count on your continued support. Such support helps to insure that quality programs and services will continue to be provided throughout the county for years to come.

YES! I want to support the mission of NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. and help celebrate your 30th anniversary.

Donation enclosed: \$ _____ (Please make check payable to NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc.)

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Company (if applicable): _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____ Fax: (_____) _____

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Please detach and mail with your donation to: NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc., 152 Tices Lane, East Brunswick, NJ 08816.

To make a donation using a credit card, please go to the NCADD website at [/www.ncadd-middlesex.org/donate/](http://www.ncadd-middlesex.org/donate/)

Thank you for your support!

Building Healthy Communities
31 Years of Preventing Substance Abuse and Supporting Personal Recovery

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