



Youth Networking Newsletter

Drive for Awareness 2007 Raises Awareness About the Risks of Underage Drinking

In Lower Fairfield County, we have a strong emphasis on addressing underage drinking. Why? Consider the following:

- In our region, the average age for 1st time drinkers is 11.7. (UConn Study)
 - More than 40% of individuals who start drinking before age 13 will develop alcohol abuse/alcohol dependence later in life (Grant and Dawson, 1997)
 - In Fairfield County, teenage alcohol consumption is 20% above the national average. (UConn Study)
- The Lower Fairfield County Regional Action Council (LFCRAC) knows that collaboration can strengthen local initiatives. LFCRAC

works to bring groups of people together to reduce substance abuse and support local prevention efforts in Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan and Darien from youth through seniors. All proceeds go to benefit the Local Prevention Councils in the four communities represented in the Regional Action Council (Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien).

The Drive For Awareness was a big success with participation from around the region. We would like to thank everyone for their support, are sure everyone learned something about the risks of underage drink-



ing and drinking and driving. It was a team event with numerous people deserving credit. We'd especially give thanks to the owners and attendees—they were the heart of the show!

Amy Badini
Chair, Drive For Awareness Committee
Lower Fairfield County Regional Action Council

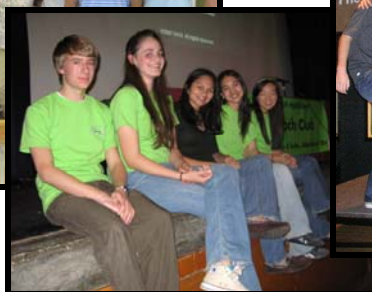
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Special points of interest:

- Between 50 and 60 percent of all fatal car crashes that occurred on weekends during graduation season were alcohol related, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- People who drink before the age of 21 are 50% more likely to be an alcoholic by the age of 30.

Faces Working in the Region



Darien

We first heard about the Families in Recovery Program (F.I.R.P.) through Janice at the Depot. She said she took a few girls to sit and talk with some families and we thought it would be an interesting experience. We were all nervous walking into a room full of girls who were troubled. We sat there for about an hour and listened to the interesting backgrounds of the women's lives and how they have grown from their experiences. We had never felt so close to such strangers in our lives and it made the experience that much more moving. A few of the kids would come looking for their mom's and our hearts would melt at the sight of these beautiful babies who had mothers that were suffering through such hard times. One of the kids even came over and gave all of

"To condone teenagers' drinking beer or any kind of alcoholic beverage in one's home because 'they are going to drink anyway' is, in my view, a feeble excuse. Furthermore, providing minors with alcohol is in violation of the law. If the children were mine, I would insist on hosting the party in my home and providing the snacks, the soft drinks—and the supervision."

*~Abigail "Dear Abby" Van Buren,
Los Angeles Times
May 5, 1991*

such bad decisions. While talking with the women, we usually use up most of the time talking about the women's experiences and asking questions about the aftermath of certain situations. It is an enlightening experience to know what will happen without having to make the mistakes ourselves.

us a hug.

Both the women and the girls who go to visit and talk get a lot out of the visits. The women get people to tell their stories to and listen without judging them, and we get an education on the effect of making

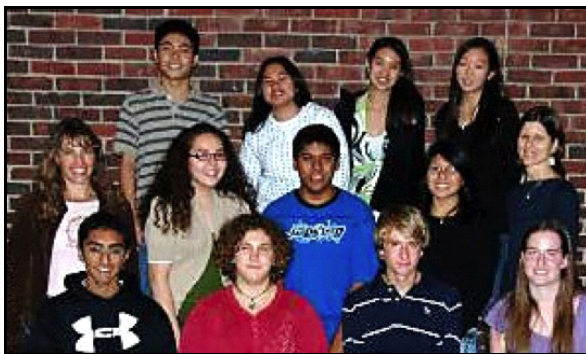
We had a good idea to host a Band Night and we made about a hundred dollars and put that towards making 10 baskets together. The baskets were full of necessary products such as shampoo, soap, hair ties, etc. so that the women could have fresh new products to use and feel good about themselves. We even bought the curtains for their rooms! It is an experience of a lifetime and we all love visiting the women and children.

*~Kalie Wilson
Junior at Darien High School*



Greenwich

Week after week news surfaces about teens getting arrested at a house party for drinking, or being injured or even dying in drunk driving accidents. However, there is not enough news about the positive efforts that are being made by groups such as Greenwich High School's Outreach Club. By providing safe alternative events and spreading information about the risks of underage drinking throughout the school year, the small yet dedicated group is definitely making a difference. I am proud to be part of such a special group be-



The media message to youth is clear: alcoholic beverages are essential to social acceptance, of minimal harm to health, and a reward at the end of a normal day's work, a school exam, a sports victory, or for any relaxing moment. The risk for excessive alcohol use is never stated or even implied.

*~American Academy of Pediatrics
Committee on Substance Abuse*

cause I see the efforts that we make actually having an impact on my peers.

Our events are held by teens for teens, and that is the best way to make a difference. Coming from a friend's mouth, a message about the dangers involved with drinking or an urgent plea

for someone to not drink means so much more. One event that Outreach Club sponsors is "Saturday Night Lights" (SNL). The event is geared towards teenagers, and is hosted at Roger Sherman Baldwin Park under the lights. You may be asking yourself "what lights?" One of the goals of the club is to have the parks in Greenwich lit, so that they are a safer place for teens to hang out. SNL includes activities such as volleyball and skating at the skate park, which would normally not be accessible after dusk. There is an acoustic open-mic set up for performances by talented local teenagers. This event is just one example of the wonderful and safe alternative events that Outreach is proud to host.

*~ JJ Micik
Junior, Greenwich High School*

New Canaan

The New Canaan Coalition was established to assist youth in creating and implementing our own underage drinking and substance abuse prevention projects which help promote healthier youth in our town. With a group of over 30 teens, the New Canaan Coalition has done quite a lot this year. Meeting monthly to brainstorm, and plan education programs for adults and teens, the Coalition has had a busy year. Starting the year with a successful panel night for teens and adults, the Coalition brought in experts from the town, and surrounding areas to address the new underage drinking laws in Connecticut. The Coalition has also sponsored, many school dances, as well as



A child who reaches age 21 without smoking, abusing alcohol, or using drugs is virtually certain never to do so.

~Joseph A. Califano, Jr.
Chairman and President,

National Center on Substance Abuse
and Addictions at Columbia University

naan High School, we have taken on the challenge of helping eighth graders enter high school substance free. In addition to chaperoning eighth grade dances at The Outback Teen Center, we co-lead "rap" groups, where the eighth graders and high school students, along with an

helping the administration implement breathalyzers. Along with sponsoring school dances, we have spoken at and promoted many school assemblies, showing our peers how to make healthy choices. Besides running programs with

adult talk about healthy transitions to a substance free high school. We have promoted programs such as "The Tip Line", which is a line that teens or adults could call to get help for those involved in substance abuse. The Coalition, with many amazing adult leaders, is mainly run on student ideas, and has built a bond with the High School and Middle schools administration and are able to use this bond to really make a difference in our community. Our future plans include, helping with the eighth grade transition to the high school, as well as chaperoning another middle school dance, and meeting with fifth and sixth graders and teaching them how to be substance free.

~Liz Perreca

Senior New Canaan High School



Stamford

The STAND club (Students Against Negative Decisions) at Westhill High School has been meeting for the past several years. Dedicated to informing their peers about the risks of drinking and driving, they hosted a mock car crash during prom season.

Members of the Turn of River Fire Department simulate a drunken-driving car crash at Westhill High School and used the

jaws of life to extract fake victims. They place a sheet over Cody Hart, a student playing the part of a fatal victim, after removing the roof and doors of the car. Students reported a real positive impact from the demonstration.

Projects Found to be Successful in other Communities

- Paper Bags for Liquor Stores: bags decorated with prevention messages
- PSA: developing public service announcements regarding the risks of underage drinking during shown at school functions, in the movies, etc.
- AOD: campaign to promote adolescent alcohol and drug free commitments
- Will Not Serve Contracts: parents to sign agreements that they will not serve minors alcohol in their home
- Performance Presentations: skits, poems, etc to inform youth and or adults about the risks of underage drinking
- Truth in Advertising Campaign: Youth see more TV commercials for beer than for sneakers, gum or jeans.
- Peer Mentoring: social things, making choices
- Have parents have alcohol free events for *their* peers.
- Needs assessments and surveys/simple counts/interviews
- Publication of Tip Line
- Family Pledge
- Battle of the Bands
- Grim Reaper Day (sadd.org/campaign/grim.htm)
- Town-wide dances

Regional Youth Network
Greenwich, Darien, Stamford, New Canaan

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Regional Action Council**

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**Collaborating to Support
Healthy Communities**

For submissions or questions,
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Lower Fairfield County Regional Action Council (LFCRAC) is a collaborative of dedicated representatives from a variety of sectors in lower Fairfield County. Our mission is to serve our communities by being a catalyst for regional collaborations in order to strengthen local efforts to reduce substance misuse from youth through seniors and including persons living with mental illness in Greenwich, Stamford, Darien and New Canaan.

Healthy Perspectives Article as appeared in the Greenwich Time By Barry Halpin

The voice of experience is speaking and students in the media center at Greenwich High School are giving him their rapt attention. Brian recounts a cautionary tale of his descent into addiction. He's eloquent, telling a compelling story to which the students can relate, and he makes them laugh.

He's been through it all: too many friends lost, a revolving door of rehab tours and jail time. Finally, it's time to end the insanity. He's willing to give rehab one more shot, and in 1999 enters Liberation House in Stamford.

Brian's been clean and sober since, but stresses that it's taken nine years to undo all the damage he did in the preceding three years. He doesn't want anyone to have to go through the pain and misery he did.

I haven't had a bad day since I've stopped using. Life is better than ever. I teach at Sacred Heart University, run my own video production company and recently had the opportunity to work for NFL films at the Super Bowl.

Brian's talk is one of five Alcohol Awareness Week assemblies organized by the Greenwich High School Outreach Club, a group that has provided alternative activities and promoted a healthy, alcohol-free lifestyle for the past eight years.

The Club, and its advisors—wellness education teacher Kathy Steiner and parent Amy Badini—invite speakers to present assemblies that discuss topics related to substance abuse prevention, drinking and driving, the recovery process and the legal implications of underage drinking. Outreach works within the community to promote awareness of the risks of underage drinking. Its goal for GHS is to educate peers about the dangers of alcohol abuse while providing alternative events and ways to party sober. The group's motto is "Keep it Real...Keep it Safe.... Absolutely Dry...Party Sober.

On March 5th, the Outreach Club attended a statewide forum hosted by Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Hartford. Lucy Frisch and JJ Micik, gave a presentation on what the group stands for and its accomplishments in the Greenwich community.

The forum was a precursor to 12 "Take it Back" community forums across the state. "Take it Back" is a national, youth-directed movement to reduce alcohol problems (www.utakeitback.org). It's about kids helping kids; using their power, influence and brains to change the way alcohol influences young people's lives—working together to help keep kids safe.

Two days after Brian spoke at GHS, I spoke with members of the Outreach Club and their advisers. Here's what they had to say:

Badini: "It's really about civic responsibility and doing the right thing. The kids want to make a difference and help keep their peers safe."

JJ Micik, 11th grader: "There's a problem with underage drinking in our society and I feel that by promoting awareness and providing alternative activities, we're making a difference."

Lianne Khoo, 11th grader: "The Alcohol Awareness Week Assemblies have been great. Very real and very personal."

Armela Olaes, 11th grader: "I feel like we're making an impact."

Gibby McHugh, 9th grader: "My dad told me horror stories about drunk-driving accidents and alcohol-related violence and I thought I needed to do something to try and stop the craziness."

Lucy Frisch, 11th grader: "I feel the message is so important. Being a member of the club puts things in perspective and helps keep it real. I've always felt OK in social situations and never felt like I had to drink. It would be great if we could get more kids to party sober."

Steiner: "The assembly with the drunk-driving offender sent a very powerful message to the students. One mother even called up to thank her son's teacher for taking him to hear the offender speak. I know the club is making a difference. They really care about helping their peers."