

Lifeline

News from the
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Delaware County

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Council and Coalition Plan School Survey on Underage Drinking

The Coalition for Healthy and Safe Communities of Delaware County, a collaborative effort of community members concerned about underage drinking, has asked Delaware County schools to participate in a survey designed to measure a broad range of risk and protective factors.

Called the *Communities That Care Youth Survey*, the study will describe the demographics of the student population and analyze its use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, inhalants, and illicit drugs as well as such behavior as delinquency.

The decision to proceed with the survey was taken after a team of County leaders and Council staff members traveled to Rye Brook, New York recently to attend a three-day conference on the problem of underage drinking. The conference was sponsored by the Underage Drinking Prevention Institute of New York State's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

The team, called the Underage Drinking Task Force, was led by David Ramsey, executive director of

the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council, and included Delaware County Sheriff Thomas Mills; Raymond Pucci, president of the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce; Renee Barchitta, Stop DWI Coordinator; Chris Hodges, Youth Court Advisor and Social Service Worker; Jason Stanton, Council prevention educator, and Mary Wake, community health counselor at SUNY Delhi. Kristina Hamalainen, a student, and Mary Rosenthal, a parent, also attended.

The Council was responsible for compiling the application to the conference and assembling the task force. The application described Delaware County as "a large, isolated rural area," where "many teenagers are idle and frequently adopt behaviors that include the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco."

The task force has applied for a grant to help underwrite the cost of the school survey. Additional funds will come from other sources. The grant will enable the task force to continue to combat the problem of underage drinking.

Moments...with Bill W.

In an event co-sponsored by the Council and LEAF of Otsego County, nearly 300 people attended a one-man performance in Oneonta based on the life and times of Bill Wilson (1895-1971), the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. On stage Bill McNiff, who has been appearing as Bill W. for 10 years, re-creates a 1950 A.A. meeting in Kips Bay, New York, with Wilson the guest speaker.

The time is important in A.A. history, because, Dr. Bob, the other co-founder, had died just before. In his monologue, McNiff as Wilson relates how he and Dr. Bob, both of them considered hopeless drunks, met in Akron, Ohio, in 1935, and, by sharing their experiences, helped each other stay sober. From these first encounters, A.A. was born.

Moments...an Evening with Bill W. ended on an emotional note with Wilson recounting Dr. Bob's last words to him: "Don't mess this up. Keep it simple."

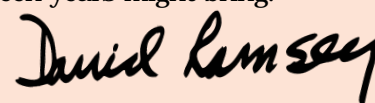
A Letter from the Director

In a few weeks the Council will hold its 17th annual dinner. Seventeen years! It seems a long time, but, from where I sit, as the relatively new director, the Council appears to be a fledgling organization still trying to plant its feet solidly on the ground.

The reason for this perception is that the ground keeps shifting under us. Seventeen years ago the Council was formed to deal with one problem—alcohol. Then came drugs; first marijuana but then cocaine, crack, and heroin which wreaked the same havoc in this bucolic county as in the most devastated inner city.

And the problems and consequent challenges keep mounting. Seventeen years ago tobacco was beginning to be considered harmful; today it is widely recognized as a dangerous, even lethal substance. Even very young children have discovered inhalants, potentially deadly products that are found in every household. Gambling, too, has joined the family of addictions; in fact, this year's annual dinner speaker, Roger Svendsen, is an expert on addictive gambling as well as substance abuse.

It is not a rosy picture; whatever progress we make seems overshadowed by new problems on the horizon. So, to be effective, the Council must stay fresh with new ideas and energy. For who knows what the next seventeen years might bring.



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LifeLine

is a quarterly publication of the
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council
of Delaware County

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(607) 746-8300

Mission Statement

The Council is a public non-profit organization committed to the prevention of alcohol and substance abuse. We provide information, referral, and educational services to individuals and families to promote personal growth and informed choices.

We envision a future in which individuals have chosen to live free from the harm of substance abuse.

opinion

Plain Talk about our Youth

We do not need studies or surveys or statistics to confirm what we all know at heart: that there is a serious drug and alcohol problem in Delaware County. Still, when such a study comes along, the figures can startle and shock. So it is with the conclusions of a report, the *Delaware County Community Health Assessment*, prepared last year by the county Public Health Department. From 1995 to 1997, for example, the rate of treatment for alcohol problems in the county increased 25 per cent, while the rate for substance abuse grew by one-third.

Furthermore, the rate of increase is highest among youth—an alarmingly high percentage of children age 12-20—a development that does not bode well for the future. Individuals in this age category account for nearly "thirty percent of all patients receiving treatment" at the Delaware County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Clinic in Hamden in 1997.

Obviously there are no quick fixes. In the report, the Public Health Department emphasized its need "to work closely with school districts, county agencies, and community service organizations to launch an aggressive public health information program regarding alcohol abuse." We would add that there is a pressing need to develop new and creative programs for high school students. Also, more parents need to be brought on board. A prevention or abstinence message delivered at school can be easily forgotten or ignored if it is not reinforced by the support—and particularly the action—of the parents at home.

Word from the Past

"When I do come to town, bang go my plans in a horrid alcohol explosion that scatters all my good intentions like bits of limbs and clothes over the doorsteps and into the saloon bars of the tawdriest pubs in London."

Dylan Thomas, 1936

Prevention Expert to Address Annual Dinner

Roger Holger Svendsen, a nationally known expert on prevention of addictions, will address the Council's 17th annual dinner on November 3. Svendsen, who is Training and Program Development Director for the Minnesota Institute of Public Health, has titled his talk, "Preaching to the Choir."

"Council members already believe in our mission," explained director Ramsey. "Roger Svendsen will explain how they can carry the message that prevention works into the rest of the community."

Svendsen's expertise includes addiction among student athletes; For the past decade Svendsen has conducted workshops for the

National Collegiate Athletic Association on preventing addiction among student athletes. He has also served on the Major League Baseball Alcohol and Drug Prevention Task Force and, since 1973, has conducted hundreds of workshops, seminars and trainings on health-related topics in the United States, and abroad.

Earlier this year, Svendsen, received an award from the National Council on Problem Gambling for "personal commitment and dedication to the goals and objectives" of the organization. In 1985, he received USA Today's MVP Honor for "People Who Make a Difference."

ISSUES • IDEAS • NOTES • NOTIONS • NEWS

Recovery Month
Proclaimed

The Delaware County Board of Supervisors officially named September National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Recovery Month in a proclamation that called upon citizens to "join the national effort to promote the effectiveness of the recovery process."

The local initiative was part of a state and national campaign to promote the benefits of treatment. The theme for Recovery Month was *Addiction Treatment: Investing in People for Business Success*.

The proclamation stated that "substance abuse is a disease that affects individuals and their coworkers, friends, families, and employers, making the need crucial to recognize that addiction treatment is a wise investment..."

Commenting on Recovery Month, Council director Ramsey pointed out that 73 per cent of alcohol and drug abusers are employed. "We want to reduce the stigma of treatment so that employees are not ashamed or fearful to ask for help," he said. "We also want to be sure employers have the resources to provide help when it is needed."

The Council is qualified to conduct trainings and orientations on substance abuse for businesses. For information on the Drug Free Workplace program, contact the Council at 72 Main Street, Delhi, 13753. Telephone: 607-746-8300.

Details on Dinner

The 17th Annual dinner of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council will be held on Wednesday, November 3, 1999, at the Alumni Hall Hospitality Center, SUNY Delhi. A reception will begin at 6.30 p.m.; a buffet dinner will be served at 7 p.m. For tickets—at \$20 per person—contact the Council before October 20th at 746-8300 or send your check to the Council at 72

Main Street, Delhi, 13753. The Council hopes to surpass the outstanding attendance at last year's dinner. For a report on the speaker, Roger Holger Svendsen, see the article on the opposite page.

The family of Steven Amundsen of Margaretville, who died in September, requested that contributions be made in his memory to the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Delaware County. The Council extends its sympathy to the Amundsen family and thanks all who contributed in his name.

the criminal justice system in New York State. The dialogues will be part of a state-wide project, "Balancing Justice in New York State," sponsored by the League of Women Voters.

The project's goal is to establish 300 community discussion groups of eight to 12 people each across the state, which will meet once a week for three consecutive weeks. In March, participants will be invited to an Action Forum to share ideas and determine a course of action. Recommendations resulting from the process will be presented to the legislature shortly thereafter.

The project is based on a similar initiative completed recently by the League of Women Voters in Oklahoma, where over 1,000 people from 13 communities participated.

Anyone interested in serving on such a committee locally should contact the Council (746-8300). For more information on the project, contact the League's Rob Marchiony at (518) 465-4162.

Balancing Justice

During January and February 2000 the Council will be co-sponsoring a series of community discussions on

DID YOU KNOW...?

THE FACTS ON DRINKING AND DRIVING

OF 41,967 TRAFFIC fatalities in 1997, 39 percent were alcohol-related. ALCOHOL-RELATED CRASHES cost the U.S., in 1994, \$45 billion in direct cost, lost of earnings, and household productivity.

MORE THAN 70 PER CENT of drivers convicted of driving while impaired have serious drinking problems.

DRUGS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL (e.g. marijuana and cocaine) have been identified as factors in 18 per cent of deaths among drivers.

ABOUT 1.4 MILLION ARRESTS are made annually for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics.

ADULT DRIVERS 35 YEARS OR OLDER are about eleven times more likely to die in crashes involving alcohol than those who have never been arrested.

BY YEAR 2000, the U.S. Public Health Service seeks to reduce deaths due to alcohol-related crashes to no more than 5.5 per 100,000 people. In 1997 the rate was 6 per 100,000.

ALCOHOL-RELATED FATALITIES declined 32 % from 1987 to 1997.

Source: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

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Youth Using Fewer Drugs

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72 Main Street, Delhi, NY 13753

HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala has released findings of the 1998 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), showing that illicit drug use declined among young people age 12-17 from 1997 to 1998, and that illicit drug use among the overall population remained flat.

An estimated 9.9 percent of youths age 12-17 reported current illicit drug use in 1998, meaning they used an illicit drug at least once during the 30 days prior to the survey interview. This estimate represents a statistically significant decrease from the estimate of 11.4 percent in 1997.

Teen use of inhalants decreased significantly from 2.0 percent in 1997 to 1.1 percent in 1998. The survey also found that the rate of youth reporting they tried marijuana for the first time declined significantly and that the average age of first-time use went up. However, the decline in the percentage of teenagers who were current users of marijuana was not statistically significant.

White House National Drug Policy Director Barry McCaffrey said, "This first major sign of success has occurred because parents, teachers, coaches, ministers, and community coalitions, are all working together in a comprehensive national and local effort. The fact that the numbers are best for the youngest (12-17) group is a harbinger that use will continue to fall as this group grows older."

In 1998, an estimated 13.6 million Americans overall (6.2 percent of the U.S. population age 12 and older) were current users of illicit drugs. The number of current illicit drug users is about half its peak in 1979, when there were 25 million current users.

LifeLine

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ANNUAL DINNER: NOV 3

PREVENTION IN THE SCHOOLS

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is an unsettling reality that children are turning to drugs and alcohol at increasingly earlier ages; studies show that most children by age three can identify beer and liquor and also discern drug abuse. These are some of the reasons why, at the Council, we consider our school programs to be at the heart of what we do. At present we provide the prevention programs in twelve of Delaware County's thirteen school districts. The programs we offer include BABES for children in grades one through three; I'M SPECIAL for 4th graders; and LIFE SKILLS TRAINING for grades 6 through 9. The Council also conducts the INSIGHT PROJECT for at-risk teenagers at the Delaware County BOCES campuses. This special education insert contains descriptions of all four programs. If you would like more information or have any questions, please contact us at the Council.

About Dr. Botvin

The author of the Life Skills Training program, Dr. Gilbert J. Botvin, holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University (1977) with training in developmental and clinical psychology. In 1980, Dr. Botvin joined the faculty of Cornell University Medical College where he is currently a professor of both Public Health and Psychiatry.

Dr. Botvin is also Director of Cornell's Institute for Prevention Research. He has written widely and has served as a consultant to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the White House Office on Drug Policy, and the World Health Organization.

He has received the FBI's national leadership award (1994), and awards from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Society of Prevention Research.

Life Skills Training for Better Choices

Life Skills Training (LST) is one of today's most highly praised prevention programs; some studies show that the curriculum reduces alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by 50 to 75 percent.

LST developer Gilbert Botvin, Ph.D., said LST's name points to the program's emphasis on providing young people with the life skills they need to meet the challenges of adolescence, including:

- coping skills, including decision-making and problem-solving self-management
- self-assessment
- goal-setting
- charting their own progress

LST providers also try to make students aware of pro-drug influences in society and correct the misperception that everyone uses drugs, Botvin said. Resistance skills are emphasized.

Botvin said that empowering youth to control their own destiny

is the most meaningful way to enhance their self-esteem. LST's interpersonal and social-skills training allows at-risk kids to communicate without conflict and build healthy relationships.

LST providers, including health professionals, peer leaders, classroom teachers and graduate students, are responsible for providing information, facilitating discussion, teaching skills, providing students with positive reinforcement, and providing participants with the opportunity to practice what they've learned.

Research has demonstrated that LST works better with younger kids, but the program has proven effective with inner-city minority populations as well as suburban youths. The dozen-plus major studies of LST have shown that students who don't take part in LST are twice as likely to smoke cigarettes. Similarly children who

receive the basic LST training plus booster sessions cut their drug use from 75 to 87 percent.

A long-term follow-up study of LST, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1995, looked at 6,000 New York students from 56 schools who took part in LST and found that the program's impact carried over from junior high to high school. Among students who had received Life Skills Training, pack-a-day smoking was reduced by 25 percent by the end of high school.

Barriers to program implementation include lack of training and support; limited resources; overcrowding; class-management problems; low teacher morale and burnout; and competing government mandates, said Botvin. "If the program it is not implemented with a reasonable degree of faithfulness to the model, it's not likely to be as effective," he added.

BABES

BABES is a primary prevention program for children ages 3 to 8, that provides factual information on alcohol and other drugs, introduces decision making and coping skills, and, with the use of puppets, increases self-awareness. The seven-lesson program starts by introducing the concept of self-image as the way we feel about

'The test of life is not what the student can do under a teacher's direction but what the teacher has enabled him to do on his own.'

M. Gibbons, *Walkabout: Searching for the Right Passage from Childhood and School* (1974)

ourselves. Other lessons include sessions on peer pressure, coping skills, and getting help. Lesson 6 is designed to tell children living in chemically dependent families that: You are not alone; it's not your fault; you can tell someone you trust. After a review of the

program in the final session, each child receives a certificate of completion.

'I'm Special'

I'm Special, a program that is taught in the 4th grade in Delaware County, was developed in the mid-70's to make an impact on the demand for drugs. It is based on research that shows that students were more likely to use drugs if they had negative attitudes about school, poor relationships with teachers, incohesive families, and low self-esteem. In the program students learn how to develop healthy attitudes, say "no," and make good decisions.

The four-session *I'm Special* curriculum also provides age-appropriate drug information and a clear "no use" message.

INSIGHT

The Insight Project is designed to address problems of truancy, suspension, drop outs, and violence in youths age 13 to 18. Over the current school year five groups of

ten students each will meet at the county's BOCES locations. The students will be referred by Youth Court, Probation, schools, Department of Social Services, and parents. The goal is to develop skills needed to succeed in school.

Polly Judd and Her Puppets

The Council's School programs are taught by Polly Judd, prevention educator at the Council for ten years. She is particularly well known for her puppet presentations, as part of the BABES program, to young children, who remember her years later as "the puppet lady." Her cast of puppet characters follows:

- Buttons and Bows McKitty are brother and sister kittens. They reflect the same feeling that children experience and demonstrate acceptable ways to handle real life situations.

- Myth Mary: a squirrel who repeats everything she hears, much of it based on misconceptions.

- Early Bird: His "honk-honk" is a warning signal for self-defeating behavior.

- Donovan Dignity: A wise owl who corrects Myth Mary's misconceptions and shares a lot of other information about healthy living.

- Recovering Reggie; A dog who is a recovering, cross-addicted alcoholic. He passes on lessons in living he has learned in his recovery.

- Rhonda Rabbit is an abused child who lives with two cross-addicted alcoholics. She is the "voice of experience" who tells children what has happened to her and how she coped.

Myths Versus Realities

Exploding myths about drugs and alcohol is one goal of school prevention programs. The following samples of "myths" and "realities" appear in a Student Guide by Gilbert J. Botvin entitled *Life Skills Training: Promoting Health and Personal Development*.

Myth: My friends will think I'm a wimp if I don't drink a lot.

Reality: Here's a secret: most people don't really notice how much others are drinking or even what they are drinking.

Myth: I just drink wine or beer.

Reality: A can of beer or 8 ounces of wine contains about 1 ounce of alcohol, the same as in a "shot" of whiskey, vodka, or gin.

Myth: Cigarette smoking is not as dangerous as some people say

Reality: Most health experts agree that cigarette smoking is one of the most serious causes of death and disability in this country.

Myth: I will not have to worry about smoking until I am old.

Reality: Smoking hurts you now. It hurts you physically by decreasing your ability to perform strenuous activity, elevating carbon monoxide levels, staining teeth and fingers, affecting your sense of taste and causing you to smell like smoke.



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