

September 2012



coalition news

Prevention news and information from the Tiverton Prevention Coalition

The Coalition speaks out...

When Famous Teens Get Caught Drinking: What Can Tiverton Learn?

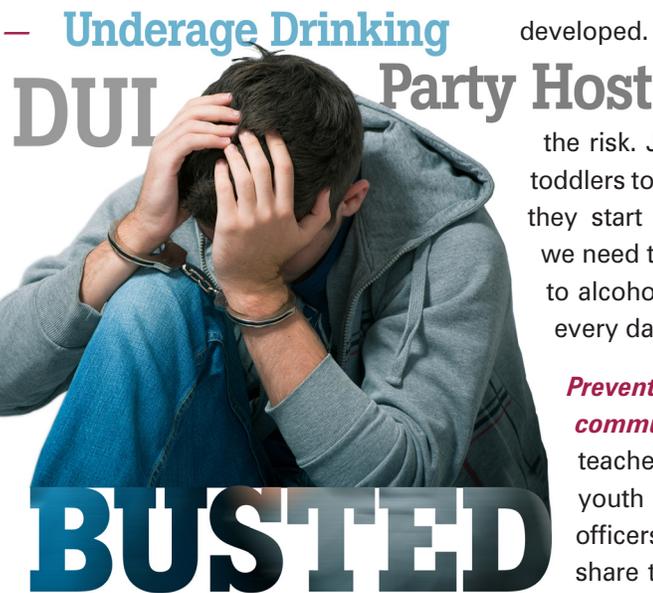
What happens in Rhode Island or around the nation — when the teenage son or daughter of a politician, celebrity or other public figure gets caught red-handed breaking a law related to alcohol? The “story”

hits the front pages of local newspapers and tops the local evening news. We hear from police, lawyers, judges, and maybe from an authority on underage drinking. The story lingers for a few days, maybe a bit longer if someone is injured or killed, and then it seems to quickly fade away, out of sight, out of mind.

However, the problem of underage drinking remains and, unfortunately, is also not likely to get widespread public attention until the next high-profile case hits the headlines. The Tiverton Prevention Coalition suggests the following “prevention lessons” the Tiverton community can learn from high-profile underage drinking cases.

Prevention is not about Gotcha. Certainly, enacting and enforcing strict laws and ordinances against underage drinking and providing alcohol to a minor is a critical component of any prevention program, but prevention must go beyond enforcement. Most prevention strategies are not punitive. They support healthy child development by giving kids the information and skills they need to make healthful decisions about alcohol and drugs.

Prevention is a 24/7 mindset, not a 24-hour news cycle. Science tells us that the adolescent brain is wired to take risks, but the brain’s decision making skills are not fully



developed. Peer pressure, easy access to alcohol and its glamorization by the media intensifies the risk. Just as we keep a close eye on toddlers to reduce the risks they face when they start to explore their surroundings, we need to be mindful of the risks related to alcohol and drugs that our teens face every day.

Prevention is an individual and community responsibility. Parents, teachers, clergy, physicians, coaches, youth workers, law enforcement officers and town governments all share the responsibility of creating an environment where teens recognize

and avoid the risks of underage drinking. The community has to accept its ongoing responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing environment for our children — not just in the aftermath of a high-profile case. That responsibility begins when we accept the fact that underage drinking is not inevitable if we all do our part.

Un-Marketing Weed at THS

THS students will have the opportunity to earn community service credits and learn how to create and execute a social media campaign, under the guidance of marketing professionals, in a new community service learning program called *Perception vs. Reality:*



Un-Marketing Weed. Enrollment is limited to only 10 to 12 students each semester. Application deadline is October 5th.



REBECCA'S notes

No family is immune from the very real and sometimes tragic consequences of underage drinking. Regardless of our professions, political positions, education or parenting style, our kids sometimes make bad choices. That's why they still need parents and other adults to supervise, support, guide them and, when needed, discipline those who choose to use alcohol and other drugs.

When speaking of underage drinking, people often envision a 15,16, or 17-year old but studies tell us those most at risk are 18 or 19, newly "branded" as adults. For parents with kids just starting or returning to college, take this opportunity to talk with them again about your expectation that they will not drink until age 21. Help them plan ahead for ways to avoid situations where they may feel pressured to do so. A parent's work is not done once sons and daughters graduate from high school. In fact, when it comes to alcohol and drugs, they need you more than ever.

rebecca@tivertonprevention.org.

Around the Country: Weed & IQs

Kids who start using marijuana before age 18 are likely to decrease their IQs by an average of eight points by middle age, according to research reported by the [National Academy of Sciences](#) in August. Despite this finding and many other proven harmful effects, daily marijuana use among high school seniors is at a 30-year peak.

Compounding the problem, many teens no longer consider marijuana harmful, an attitude shift that experts attribute to the legalization of "medical marijuana." In 1990, over 40% of high school seniors perceived marijuana as harmful. In 2010, less than 25% thought so, according to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#). In Tiverton, according to the 2012 Health and Wellness Survey, 56% of all high school students reported that daily marijuana use did not pose a moderate or serious risk of harm. Studies show that as perception of risk decreases, marijuana use increases.



Practicing Prevention: Myth Busters

Alcohol isn't as harmful as other drugs. Beer and wine are safer than liquor. Adults drink; older kids should be able to drink too.

Whether they get these ideas from peers, the media or overheard adult conversations, kids during early adolescence often make the decision to try alcohol based on these and other myths. They may think they need to drink to fit in. They may think it will make them cool. They may believe there are no harmful consequences to drinking every now and then. All this underscores the need for ongoing communication about the hard facts of alcohol and drugs during the sometimes tumultuous teen years.

But good prevention starts even before then. If we anticipate that teens will likely use these myths to make decisions about alcohol, we can be myth-busters during their pre-adolescent years, giving them the knowledge they need to explode these myths themselves. One good reason to start alcohol prevention early: they listen so much better before they're 13. Check out [Underage Drinking: Myths vs. Facts](#) for some discussion starters — and the facts.

Got Drugs?

Prescription Drug Take-Back Day

Sept. 29th, 2012
10am – 2pm

Tiverton Police Station
Industrial Way



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Contact the Coalition

Phone: 401.835.5311

E-mail: Rebecca@tivertonprevention.org

www.tivertonprevention.org

