



coalition news

Prevention news and information from the Tiverton Prevention Coalition

Prevention Strategies Show Results, But Still Plenty of Work to be Done

A review of four years of student surveys funded by the Drug Free Communities grant shows that prevention strategies and programs are beginning to pay off in Tiverton. Between 2012 and 2015, teen substance use is down in all four categories tracked by the Tiverton Health and Wellness Survey, which is administered each spring to Tiverton High School students.

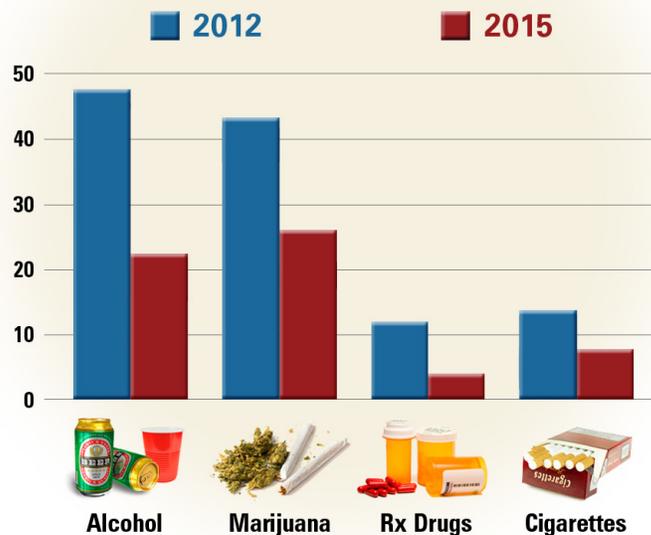
Alcohol use showed the sharpest three-year decline. In 2015, 21 percent of THS students reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, down from 48 percent in 2012. During the same period, marijuana use declined from 44 to 26 percent; using prescription medicine for non-medical purposes dropped from 12 to five percent; and tobacco use fell from 14 to eight percent.

Baby steps. "Reducing teen substance abuse is a lot like turning around a battleship," Rebecca Elwell said. "It takes time. Many factors contribute to a teen's decision to use alcohol and other drugs: parental influence, peer pressure, drug education, society's attitudes about drugs, social media – it's a long list. The good news is that we are headed in the right direction. The ship is beginning to turn."

Challenges ahead. The survey also shows some unfavorable trends, not different than most other communities in the country: as students get older the percentage of students who use alcohol and other drugs gets larger each year from seventh through twelfth grades. For example, only one-and-

a-half percent of seventh graders in Tiverton reported past 30 day use of marijuana in 2015, compared to 42 percent of THS seniors. Not surprisingly, the perception of risk drops dramatically over the same time period. Eighty-six percent of seventh graders say that marijuana is a moderate to great health risk but only 55 percent of twelfth graders think using the drug is risky behavior.

SUBSTANCE USE A Downward Trend in All Categories Grades 9-12



"The statistics tell a story," Rebecca said. "The biggest increase in both alcohol and marijuana use occurs in ninth and tenth grades. That's where the community needs to intensify its prevention efforts. More parental involvement, more education about the risks, more counseling for kids who are questioning drug use, more emphasis on positive social norms, and more community involvement in prevention are all strategies that work."

Coming in August. Watch for a full report on the Tiverton Health and Wellness Survey in the Coalition's special summer issue, which will be mailed to all households in Tiverton in August.

Vaping Tricks, Really?

Pediatricians and psychiatrists from the Yale School of Medicine [surveyed](#) 5,400 Connecticut middle and high school students in 2014 to find out why the use of e-cigarettes is on the rise among the nation's youth. One finding surprised them.

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REBECCA'S notes

I am always looking for ways to enhance Tiverton's ability to protect our teens from the harms associated with substance use. I'm also the first to acknowledge that the Coalition can't do it alone.

I'd like to make 15-minute presentations at regular monthly meetings of other Town organizations between now and October 1. I'd like to propose a communications partnership that I believe is a Win-Win opportunity for your organization, The Coalition, and every teen in Tiverton. Importantly, you have my promise: I'm not asking for money!

If you are an officer or member of a town organization, please invite me to attend one of your meetings. Call me at (401) 835-5311 or send me an e-mail at rebecca@tivertonprevention.org. I hope to hear from you. *Thanks!*

Christina Bebe Awarded Scholarship

THS senior Christina Bebe, who is heading to Wheelock College in the fall to major in social work, juvenile justice, and youth advocacy, was awarded the Coalition's first Dr. William White Prevention Scholarship on May 27.

A competitive scholarship, applicants were asked to submit a list of their community service and high school activities, and to write an essay that explained how they, as students, contributed to preventing and reducing substance use during their four years at THS.



Christina played a major role in the Teen Dating Violence Awareness Campaign sponsored by the Peer Helping Network, where she also served as a mentor for younger students. She also volunteered for the Coalition's UnMarketing Weed program, a media campaign to send the message that marijuana use is much more risky than most high school students believe.

Christina has also been involved in Marching Band, Concert Band, Math Team, Eighth Grade Orientation Programs, Pardon Gray Day, Save the Bay — and the Haunted House at Fort Adams. She was the winner of 2014 Student Sage Award and is a member of the Rhode Island and National Honor Society.

"With social media romanticizing the effects of drugs and alcohol," she wrote in her award-winning essay, "youth are sucked into believing that such activities allow for fun and memories that are never to be forgotten. Yet, the reality of it all, is the majority of memories you have when you're high or drunk fade away after the effects of drugs and alcohol disappear, and they are left to wonder what happened the night before. Knowing the reality over the perception kept me from being curious about the effects of drugs and alcohol. I knew better."

Vaping Tricks, Really? *(continued from page 1)*

The flavor of the nicotine in e-cigs, like mango, sour cherry, cappuccino, Cinnamon Bun, rum and cola, was the reason most cited. Surprisingly, "vaping tricks" — including blowing vapor rings and the "dragon trick," where vapor is exhaled through the nose and sides of the mouth simultaneously — came in second.



Vaping is popular. A YouTube search for "vaping tricks" yielded more than 26,000 hits with no shortage of "vaping tutorials," many produced and uploaded by teens.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [reported](#) e-cigarette use among high school students increased from 4.5 percent in 2013 to 13.4 percent in 2014, rising from approximately 660,000 to 2 million students. Among middle school students, current e-cigarette use more than tripled from 1.1 percent in 2013 to 3.9 percent in 2014 — an increase from approximately 120,000 to 450,000 students.

The Yale study concluded, "Federal and local policies addressing adolescent e-cigarette availability and marketing, as well as programs to prevent the exponential rise in e-cigarette use among adolescents, are urgently needed."

