

November 2015



coalitionnews

Prevention news and information from the Tiverton Prevention Coalition

Prevention in Action: Snapshot of a Coalition Meeting

Each month during the school year volunteers come together to plan the Town's prevention programs. They're parents, teachers, mental health professionals, prevention specialists, statisticians, media experts and police officers — a broad cross-section of the community dedicated to helping kids remain drug free.

If you were the proverbial fly on the wall during the Coalition's November meeting, you would have gotten a snapshot of prevention in the works. If you weren't there, read on.

Health, Wellness and Recess. Sally Black, chair of the Wellness Committee, talked about the importance of a Tiverton school policy that prohibits using recess as a disciplinary strategy, or to make up academic assignments. In addition to a time to unwind, recess also helps build skills that help keep kids drug free.

In a position paper by education experts, [Recess and The Importance of Play](#), recess helps to teach children how to make good choices. It acts as a safe, healthy outlet for reducing anxiety and serves as a means by which children learn to manage stress and gain self-control. Recess also develops a respect for rules, increases self-respect and helps kids learn self-discipline — skills that teens need to make safe, healthy decisions about alcohol and other drugs.

Cyberbullying. Dennis Soares, Tiverton High School's faculty moderator of the Peer Helping Network, shared PHN's plans to address cyberbullying. PHN students will launch an

anti-cyberbullying campaign at the high school and they will publish information for parents about technology and cyberbullying. Both are vital prevention activities. [Recent studies](#) have shown that teens who are cyberbullied are more likely than their peers who are not harassed online

or through cell phone messages to develop symptoms of substance abuse, depression and Internet addiction.

Going Purple. A special, eight-person subcommittee reported on the plan to launch [Project Purple](#) in Tiverton during the last week of January 2016. The nationwide Project Purple Initiative empowers youth to stand up and make a difference. But more, it's an opportunity for an entire community to show their support for kids who choose a drug-free lifestyle — by displaying a purple bow on their mailboxes from January 26 to 29.

In addition to showing town-wide support for youth, families who send a photo of a purple bow on their mailboxes will be entered into a raffle for a free family party platter — a perfect complement for a Super Bowl party on February 7. The Coalition has already purchased 600 purple bows that will be distributed in early January. *More details to follow.*

Join us. See for yourself what prevention in Tiverton is all about. All community members are welcome at Coalition meetings, which are held on the second Monday of the month from 9 to 11am at THS. Next meeting: January 11.





REBECCA'S notes

Where will we be a year from now?

Over the next few months, the Coalition will meet with representatives from the Town Council, Police Department, School Committee and all community members who want to play an active role in keeping our teens drug-free. We'll be developing a strategic plan for future Coalition goals and activities — with and without Federal funding. Our Drug Free Communities grant — \$125,000 per year — ends in 2016.

From my perspective, less money is a call for more creativity! And that's where the community comes into the picture again. Somewhere "out there" I know there are very creative ideas that will help us get to where we *want* to be next year, not just where fate or lack of planning may take us. If you'd like to take part in our strategic planning process, please let me know. Our first meeting is January 11, 2016. If you can't attend, I encourage you to send me an e-mail. I'd love to hear your ideas about how the Coalition can continue to provide programs and activities aimed at keeping our teens drug-free. In the end, money doesn't prevent underage alcohol and marijuana use. An informed, involved community does.

Holiday Trees and Prevention

Tiverton Recreation reached out to the North Pole and is happy to report that Santa and Mrs. Claus have accepted an invitation to be guests of honor at our town's Annual Holiday Tree Lighting. More than holiday family fun, events like this also help kids stay drug-free!

Research shows that when kids are involved in community and civic activities and when they "feel" that the community cares about them, they are less likely to use alcohol and other drugs during their teen years. Prevention research also confirms that the more families do things together, the less likely kids will use substances. Both of these activities build resilience, a trait teens need to stand on their own two feet and make healthy decisions during their teen years.



From a prevention perspective, The Tree Lighting will have a positive impact on our kids — long after the lights go out.

Santa and the Missus will be arriving on Saturday, December 5, at 5 p.m., aboard a Tiverton Fire Truck (no snow predicted!), escorted by Tiverton Police and the Tiverton High School Marching Band. After the tree lighting, come inside for hot chocolate, cookies, and more entertainment provided by The Tiverton High School Chorus and Councilman Brett Pelletier. Of course, kids from two to 92 can share their holiday wishes with Santa.

June, July, December

Prevention research shows that June and July are very risky months for teens. During each of those summer days, more teens use alcohol and marijuana for the first time than at any other time of the year. But following close on the heels of summer, December is the next most risky month for first-time use.



"These months include periods when adolescents are on a break from school and have more idle time; they have fewer structured responsibilities and less adult supervision," said Dr. H. Westley Clark, director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

Be extra vigilant during December. Consider this research finding a word to the wise.