

March 2014



# coalition news

Prevention news and information from the Tiverton Prevention Coalition

## Youth Committee Report:

### **Self-Medication, Drugged Driving: Key Marijuana Issues Faced by Tiverton Teens**

Why do some teens — 28 percent of Tiverton High School students, for example — decide to smoke marijuana regularly?

The Youth Action Committee, formed after the [Tiverton Marijuana Summit](#) last June, concluded that regular teen marijuana users are likely “self-medicating” for conditions like stress, anxiety and depression – all raising the specter that real medical or psychological conditions go undiagnosed at a time when they are most treatable.

The goal of the committee was to determine key issues related to youth marijuana use in Tiverton and to suggest strategies to address the issues. The Coalition would then work to implement the committee’s recommendations. YAC members included Edith Borden, Student Assistance Counselor; Christine Bandoni, resident and parent; Kasia Piasecka, Tiverton Library’s Young Adult Librarian; and Rebecca Elwell.

While self-medicating was the committee’s top concern, driving under the influence of marijuana was a close second. Youth focus groups at THS indicate that many teens think they “drive better when they’re high.” [Science](#), however, tells a different story. Marijuana can impair motor skills, perception, attention and reaction time – all essential elements of safe driving.

**Addressing the issues.** The committee recommended several community-wide strategies to prevent or reduce marijuana use by Tiverton teens:

- Distribute information that enables pediatricians to engage parents in discussions about teen marijuana use and include a substance abuse check list as part of annual teen physicals, to help determine whether there are undiagnosed symptoms of anxiety or depression.

- Create educational programs for parents, especially those with children moving from fourth to fifth and eighth to ninth grades, emphasizing marijuana’s effect of teen brain development. For elementary school parents, the committee recommended encouraging kids to develop healthy habits like regular exercise, a “good night’s sleep” and having daily family meals. When practiced regularly in pre-teen years, each has been proven to reduce the chance of substance abuse during the teen years.

- Develop a “social norms” campaign. Since “everybody does it” is an all too common assumption, the committee recommended

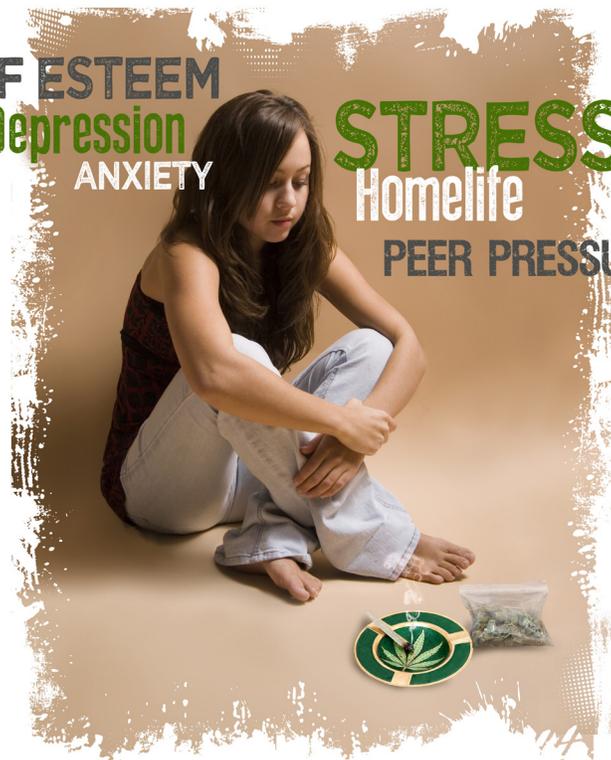
spreading the word that the “real” social norm is that **the majority of Tiverton teens — nearly 70% — DO NOT SMOKE WEED.**

- Add programs like [Life Skills](#) to the School Departments middle and high school health curriculum. They’re proven to reduce teen substance use.

**It takes a community.** To donate time or dollars to help with any of these initiatives, please contact Tiverton Prevention Coalition Coordinator [Rebecca Elwell](#).

SELF ESTEEM  
Depression  
ANXIETY

STRESS  
Homelife  
PEER PRESSURE





## REBECCA'S notes

We've all had too much marijuana lately! In addition to daily, community-level efforts to prevent and reduce teen marijuana use, prevention specialists across Rhode Island have also had to turn their attention to four marijuana-related bills now in the state legislature that will have an impact on youth in communities across Rhode Island.

Rhode Island's certified prevention specialists, many of us trained by international experts, believe we have a valuable contribution to make — and my colleagues and I have been to more than our share of state-level meetings and legislative hearings to give lawmakers the "prevention perspective" on these bills. Here's where we stand:

**HR 7506** proposes taxing and regulating marijuana like alcohol. We are opposed to this bill. It's poorly written and would make marijuana use seem more "acceptable" at a time when Rhode Island is among the top five states for teen marijuana use. Talk about throwing fuel onto a fire!

**HR 7610** is the Attorney General's recommended amendments to the state's Medical Marijuana Act. We support this bill. It will reduce teen access to the drug; improve safety in our neighborhoods, while ensuring registered MMA patients still have full access to the marijuana recommended by their physicians.

**HR7611** prohibits print and broadcast advertising of marijuana by the state's compassion centers. We support this bill because we remember "Joe Camel."

**HR7765** gives a judge the power to require substance abuse evaluation and treatment for youth offenders and mandates that 50% of fines collected for marijuana possession used exclusively for prevention programs (as the original law intended). We support this amendment.

Please contact our legislators before April 16, when the House holds hearing on these bills. Weigh in on legislation that will have an impact on Tiverton youth. *Thank you for your continuing support!*

[Rep. Dennis Canario](#) [Rep. Jay Edwards](#) [Sen. Lou DiPalma](#)  
[Sen. Walter Felag](#) [Sen. Christopher Ottiano](#)

## Student-Driven Prevention Off to a Great Start at Tiverton High



Tiger Pride is sending an important message to teens and their parents: there's PLENTY of things for teens to do on a Friday night in Tiverton!

Sponsored by the Coalition, Tiger Pride is the new Tiverton High School Student Athlete Leadership Team. Student developed and student driven, its mission is to "create a culture and develop an environment, both within our schools and our community that will promote excellence through school-wide meetings, fun and innovative activities, leadership trainings, guest speakers, positive recognitions and community outreach."

They got off to a great start in March, less than a month after the group was formed, by sponsoring the Tiger Pride Game Night on March 7 and the Tiger Pride Volleyball Tournament on March 21. Nearly 140 students went to the game night; even more attended the volleyball tournament.

Tiger Pride's goal is to promote healthy behaviors, positive choices, hard work, good sportsmanship and leadership. Varsity basketball coach Dave Landoch and assistant football coach Bill Phillips are the group's advisors. The leadership team was an outgrowth of John Underwood's [Life of an Athlete](#) program that the Coalition sponsored in February.

[Like them on Facebook!](#)

**Comments? Questions? Interests?**  
Call 401-835-5311 or send us an email at [Rebecca@tivertonprevention.org](mailto:Rebecca@tivertonprevention.org).  
[www.TivertonPrevention.org](http://www.TivertonPrevention.org)

