

June 2015



# coalition news

Prevention news and information from the Tiverton Prevention Coalition

## Reducing Summer Risks for Teens with an Extra Dose of Protective Factors

Summer is a high-risk season for teens. More teens try alcohol or other drugs for the first time in June, July and August than in any other month. Unfortunately, no vaccine will reduce this health risk. Fortunately, families and communities can.

**What's the risk?** [NSDU](#) reports that kids between the ages of 12 and 17 are far more likely to start using most substances during the summer. For example, on an average day in June or July, more than 11,000 kids use alcohol for the first time; in other months, the daily average is about 7,000; more than 4,800 kids used marijuana for the first time, while in other months the daily average was about 3,500.

Prevention Science has identified many "protective factors" — environments, conditions, or behaviors -- that increase a teen's ability to avoid risks or hazards. According to the [CDC](#), they also "promote social and emotional competence to thrive in all aspects of life, now and in the future."

**Protection starts with families.** [Research shows](#) that when parents use effective monitoring practices teens are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Knowing where your kids are, who they're with, and what they're doing helps to keep your teens safe — all made easier with cell phones, *FaceTime* and texting. Effective monitoring isn't about trust. It's about love.

Clear communication about expectations parents have is especially important. Teens who believe their parents disapprove of risky behaviors are less likely to choose those behaviors. Studies have also shown that when families



eat meals together frequently, are actively involved in a faith community, and promote good nutrition and healthy lifestyles that the risk of teen substance abuse decreases substantially.

**Communities also have a part to play.** If a community offers its teens a wide assortment of opportunities to engage in safe, healthy activities, the risk of substance use decreases. Creating this "protective environment" includes but goes beyond programs offered by the town, its departments and commissions. Town organizations

and faith communities can increase their youth programs during summer months. Retailers can hire part-time, summer employees. Families can host substance-free teen parties. Young families can offer them babysitting jobs; others can hire teens to mow their lawns.

"It's all a matter of balance," Rebecca Elwell said. "If the town's protective factors outweigh the risk factors, our kids will grow up safer and healthier."

### **New Study** **Teen Drinking Changes the Brain**

Binge drinking during adolescence leads to permanent "structural and functional abnormalities of the brain," according a [study](#) published in the April issue of the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.

*(continued on page 2)*



## REBECCA'S notes

If you've visited the Coalition's *Facebook* page recently, you've seen the [Tiger Games Photo Album](#), just a few of the more than 100 photos we snapped on June 11 at THS. Talk about a "natural high!"

There were relay races, obstacle courses and free-throw contests that challenged physical abilities; spelling bees, geography and math games, foreign language song writing that challenged thinking skills; as well as fashion design, Sketch the Teacher, singing and instrumental contests that brought out the inner artist.

Teens love a challenge, love to take risks, and love to have fun. When we offer them ways to do all three and improve their innate skills and talents at the same time, we've got a great formula for keeping kids safe. When adults provide the opportunities; the kids rise to the challenge.

Here's hoping for a Tiger Summer in Tiverton, where kids have many opportunities to learn, grow, improve their skills, develop their talents, and have loads of fun doing it.

### Teen Drinking Changes the Brain *(continued from page 1)*



In the study conducted in the Duke Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, rats were given alcohol in large amounts only during their adolescent years. As adults, they were shown to have abnormalities in the hippocampus and were seen to suffer

from memory, attention, judgment, and learning problems not seen in the control group that remained alcohol-free during its teen years.

The findings are important because most teens that drink binge drink. Around 90 percent of alcohol consumption among individuals younger than 21 was consumed in binge drinking.

Mary-Louise Risher, lead author of the study, talked about a chasm that exists between scientific fact and society's views on adolescent drinking. "In the eyes of the law, once people reach the age of 18, they are considered adult, but the brain continues to mature and refine all the way into the mid-20s," *she said*. "It's important for young people to know that when they drink heavily during this period of development, there could be changes occurring that have a lasting impact on memory and other cognitive functions."

### Nothing to Do? Think Again.

Despite the common complaint that "there's nothing to do" in Tiverton, here's just a partial list of local fun, wholesome activities designed specifically with kids in mind.



- The new [Tiverton Public Library](#), safe place to gather with friends, offers children and teen programs, and should be a "destination" for kids of all ages this summer. Family museum passes are also available.
- [Tiverton Recreation Commission](#) offers plenty to-do's for town youth: day camps, mini sports camps, kayaking, Baby Sitting Certification Class, Home Alone Safety Camp, cooking classes, and much more.
- [The Tiverton Yacht Club](#) offers both swimming and junior sailing classes for members.
- "[Every Hero Has a Story!](#)" is an incredible children's summer reading program.
- [Four Corner's Art Center](#) is offering a Children's Art Camp and Children's Introduction to Figure Drawing Class. [Westport Art Group](#) also offers an art camp for kids.

**Don't forget DIY!** Plan family cookouts, dine-outs, take-outs, pizza/movie nights and day trips. Host adult-supervised parties, camp-outs, and sleep-overs. Ask "them" to plan a family day (with and without budget). Do what you can to make sure there's something to do but let them know that sometimes it's healthy just to do nothing!

