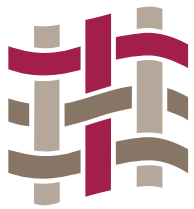


January 2014



# coalition news

Prevention news and information from the Tiverton Prevention Coalition

## Tiverton's Prevention Initiatives Go Well Beyond Tiverton

Laws, policies and regulations on the state level often produce unintended consequences on the local level, which is why Rebecca Elwell and a small group of other prevention coordinators around the state are looking beyond town borders to prevent underage substance abuse by local teens.

Last year, Elwell was one of the founding members of the [Ocean State Prevention Alliance](#) and now serves as secretary of the organization, whose mission is to prevent the negative impact of marijuana legislation on RI communities, especially among youth. Since its founding, OSPA has sponsored a legislative briefing (during which THS students made a presentation) and it has partnered with more than 26 community coalitions in RI, who now send OSPA's monthly "Community Updates" to families in those communities, something that Elwell boasts is a "real, low-cost, grassroots effort to educate Rhode Islanders about the prevention perceptiveness on marijuana."

Recently, Elwell and OSPA chair Nancy Devaney, who also manages Tiverton's Marijuana Block Grant, were invited to serve on the State Attorney General's new Marijuana Task Force, which includes not only prevention specialists but also the presidents of state's police, fire and superintendents' associations, addiction medicine specialists, and other child and mental health professionals. The Task Force, headed up by the Assistant AG Joe Lindbeck, aims to build a broad base of support to politically combat the unintended consequences of marijuana legislation.

Tiverton was also represented at a meeting with Governor Lincoln Chaffee on December 10 seeking restoration of RISAPA (Rhode Island Substance Abuse Prevention Act)



funds to communities around the state. Funds were slashed by 18%. Though the impact is slight for the 9 RI communities, including Tiverton, who have secured federal and state block grants, for most RI coalitions cutting RISAPA funds virtually eliminates their ability to implement any prevention strategies.

The delegation's message to the Governor was simple: Funding for prevention is already limited and further cuts, at a time when risk of teen substance abuse increases daily, is not the best way to keep kids safe and healthy.

### ***Around the Country: Home Grown Ordinances***

[The Partnership at Drugfree.org](#) recently reported that a growing number of town and city governments are passing ordinances that make selling and growing marijuana illegal within their borders — even in Washington and Colorado, the two states that legalized the sale and use of "recreational" marijuana in 2012.

In Colorado, dozens of local governments have banned marijuana commerce, including Colorado Springs, the state's second-largest city. In California, a state appeals court ruled last year that local governments could ban the growing of medical marijuana. In Washington, 48% of surveyed cities have implemented moratoriums on any marijuana-related business licenses; three cities have banned or threatened to ban marijuana businesses altogether and at least 1.5 million Washington residents will be impacted by local moratoriums or bans, according to [The Center for the Study of Cannabis and Social Policy](#). *(continued on reverse side)*



## REBECCA'S notes

I recently met with Representative Jay Edwards to talk about Rhode Island's two marijuana laws: "decriminalization," which Rep. Edwards sponsored, and the Medical Marijuana Act. It was a great meeting as well as a meeting of the minds.

I felt Jay's compassion when he explained that, for him, decriminalization meant kids wouldn't have to carry criminal records with them throughout life because of a youthful indiscretion. As a parent, I couldn't disagree! He also listened intently as we talked about the "unintended consequences" of the law: that many youth now believe weed is legal and others think it must be safer if penalties were reduced. Both false perceptions lead to increased use. We also discussed why all fines levied by the Traffic Tribunal, which now handles marijuana citations, are going into the general fund, when the law stipulates that 50% of those fines go to fund more prevention initiatives.

We didn't solve any world problems but we did talk and we did listen and we did start to explore the many shades of gray around marijuana. Despite the polarization around this topic, it's just not a black or white issue. My advice to Tivertonians is to keep the discussion ongoing. E-mail your legislators. Tell them what you think about marijuana legislation. Like Rep. Edwards, each of them should welcome our comments.

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

### ***Around the Country*** (continued from page 1)

Washington towns and cities, according to the State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, have the right to curb or ban marijuana business in their communities. In a legal opinion released on January 16, Ferguson said that while the state law "establishes a licensing and regulatory system for marijuana...it includes no clear indication that it was intended to preempt local authority to regulate such businesses. We therefore conclude that (the state law) left in place the normal powers of local governments to regulate within their jurisdictions."

### ***Practicing Prevention: Dating Violence***

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month and students from Tiverton High School's community service club RI HOPE along with THS teachers and staff will do their part.



Students will make morning announcements throughout the month that include statistics associated with dating violence and they will place special emphasis on healthy relationships, knowing the warning signs of abuse and where to turn for help, if needed.

According to [The Lindsay Ann Burk Memorial Fund](#), 1 in 3 teens report some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships and 1 in 3 know a peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped or hurt by a partner. This type of unhealthy relationship goes beyond physical pain and injury. It puts a teen at much greater risk for substance abuse.

"By focusing on healthy relationships and helping teens identify qualities such as equality and respect," said THS Community Service Coordinator Sheila Kauffman, "we hope to help teens make better decisions in all aspects of their lives."

For more information, check out [Katie Brown Educational Program](#). For help, contact the [National Teen Dating Violence Helpline](#) at 1-866-331-9474.

**Life of an Athlete**  
American Athletic Institute

**Save the Date: Feb. 27, 2014**  
Tiverton High Auditorium  
7 to 8:30 p.m.  
Free admission  
Donations welcome.

**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)

