



Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 17
February, 2010

Back in October, the Alliance co-sponsored with the Yorktown Parks and Recreation Department a wonderful middle school teen night at Club Fit. Club Fit provided terrific facilities, and Parks and Rec brought a great music and light show. We're thrilled that Solaris Sports Club has offered to host a similar event at the end of this month.

This points toward something that makes Yorktown a truly special place. It's a community with a heart and soul. If you reach out to your friends and neighbors, you'll find that many were born and raised here, and returned to raise their own families here.

Yorktown families care deeply about the safety of all the children in this community. ASK works very hard to be part of that, to work with all members of the community to provide a safety net for our children. Our middle school nights are part of that effort. Please take a moment and read a letter to the editor attached at the rear of this newsletter in response to coverage of a series of tragedies over the past years in Yorktown. Yorktown cares, and cares deeply.

Tricy Cushner, President Cathryn Martin, Director Cynthia Cervini, Newsletter Editor

Calendar

Sat, Feb 13th

6-10 PM

Movie Night at Club Fit. See page 2 for more info

Tues, Feb 23rd

4-5 PM

Coalition mtg, Sparkle Lake Community Bldg

Sat., Feb. 27th

8-10 PM

Middle School Night at Solaris. See page 4 for more info

Transformers 2 at Club Fit

Enjoy an evening out with your Valentine while your children enjoy a pizza and movie!

On Saturday, February 13th, Club Fit will be showing Transformers 2 in the Energy Center at Club Fit, Jefferson Valley. Drop off the kids between 6 and 7 and pick them up again by 10 PM. Pizza will be served, as well as popcorn and water during the movie. A minimum of 15 kids required to run the activity.

Register early and save! 10% discount offered for second sibling.

| | <i>Before 2/9</i> | <i>After 2/9</i> |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Members: | \$15 | \$18 |
| Child of member: | \$18 | \$20 |
| Non-members: | \$20 | \$23 |

For more information contact Mary Ann at (914) 245-4040, x1127 or mhelf@clubfit.com

Youth Court Update

The Alliance for Safe Kids Youth Court program is holding training sessions for all current and past members in February. This training will be held on Wednesdays at the Yorktown Justice Court from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. We are pleased to have Detectives Sean Lewis and Brian Shanahan from the Yorktown Police Dept as guest instructors. They will be presenting the following topics during the next few weeks:

Wed, 2/10/10, 7:00pm to 8:30pm "Street Smart" presentation, Detective Lewis

Wed, 2/17/10, 7:00pm to 8:30pm "Internet Safety/ID Theft", Detective Shanahan

Wed, 2/24/10, 7:00pm to 8:30pm "Crime Scene Investigation", Detective Lewis



For further information on the training as well as upcoming cases, please go to our Facebook page and become a fan at Alliance for Safe Kids Youth Court program, or visit us on the web at AllianceForSafeKids.org.

-Art Lander, Director, ASK Youth Court

The Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc., is a not-for profit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to keeping our kids out of harm's way. For further information, please email the Alliance at ASK4Kids@gmail.com or visit our website, www.AllianceForSafeKids.org

I was Outed Last Sunday

By Cynthia Cervini

Well, not so much “outed” as outed with a side dish of recovered memory. It all started innocently enough. Via social networking, I’d recently reunited – after twenty years - with my first boyfriend. Our reunion phone call was a week in the making as we live in different time zones. Perhaps I mentioned it within the hearing of my children (who never remember anything the first time unless it is dirt on me). But I’m getting ahead of myself.

I was settling in for a long chat and happened to notice at least one child hovering and the other making cameo appearances, undoubtedly wanting to be within earshot in case any interesting information would pop up.

There is a dark story that I rarely share with friends, of the first and last time I’ve ever had too much to drink. Tom, the aforementioned first boyfriend, had a party in his basement. This was all on the up and up; his mother was home, everybody was over eighteen - the legal drinking age at the time - and I wouldn’t have to drive because Tom was my next door neighbor (yup, I was the ‘girl next door’). So far, so good. A drink called Long Island Ice Tea was in vogue at the time, a highly concentrated alcoholic drink made up of about twenty three different liquors and ... at least, that’s how Tom made them. After too many of them, with a shot or two of teenage drama as a chaser, my girlfriend Kim and I ended up sitting it out on the curb between Tom’s house and mine.

Or so I thought. At least until Tom enlightened me. “You do remember, you and Kim took off in the car and Matty [his mom] and I had to chase after you.” Oh. I suddenly remembered. For those of you who’ve yet to experience a recovered memory I would caution you, no, *implore* you, to not repeat it out loud when your children are within earshot. My son, who was eating lunch, playing a handheld game and kicking a homemade duct tape ball around the kitchen heard ‘drunk ... car’ and felt honor-bound to share this information with his sister.

But the incident brings up a bigger question. Should we tell our kids about our exploits, our missteps, to warn them off doing stupid things, or should we keep our history buried? I was lucky to have led a boring adolescence - good thing, because I’m a terrible liar, undoubtedly due to Bollinger (maternal) genes which renders any Bollinger woman incapable of carrying off a lie (my mother swears she never even told us there was a Santa Claus).

There seem to be several sides to the issue. One that my daughter’s friend Ryan’s mother swears to is to tell your children everything as a scare tactic. “I did A, B and C and it screwed up my life, put my parents through hell and could have killed me”. I’ve seen this work. Ryan is a one-woman drug enforcement agency who has told my daughter and all of their group that if any of them drink or do drugs she will “kill them”. For a long time I thought this was a result of Ryan being struck with cancer in ninth grade and her arduous recovery; that she did not take good health for granted. Wrong. Unbeknownst to me, Ryan’s dad lived a pretty reckless life as a teenager and both parents felt it best that Ryan know this. Could it have gone the other way? Ryan could have easily turned the tables with the idea, “my dad did A, B, and C – he turned out fine”. Add to the mix the necessity of disclosure if there is a family history of drug and/or alcohol addiction. According to Allison Birnbaum, a Licensed Certified Social Worker writing for the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, parents need to recall the negative outcomes of their alcohol and drug use; to not imbue it with a taste of nostalgia for ‘the good old days’.

One of the students in my caseload, an upperclassman who gets himself involved in some risky situations, told me once that his father did a lot of the same things as a young adult. His father’s advice: “I did this stuff, I did worse so I’m always going to be a step ahead of you so *don’t lie to me*”. Don’t lie to me? That’s *it*?

Birnbaum advises, “if we choose to share our [history] with our children, we have a responsibility to reach beyond the general”. We have to talk about what our drinking/drug use cost us personally in terms of missed opportunities,

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What's on My Nightstand**Columbine**

by Dave Cullen

Review by Kay Buckley, Supervisor of Guidance Services, Yorktown High School*Kay's nightstand*

This book is a **MUST READ** for anyone who works with adolescents, who has an adolescent, and those who help adolescents. In other words, all school personnel - teachers, administrators, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, therapist - all law enforcement professionals, judges, and, yes, even parents.

Trench Coat Mafia ... unpopular bullies (Harris and Klebold) ... parents who did not parent their boys - is this your impression? It was mine, from the news and television media, until I read this book. Did you know both young men attended their prom three days before the attack?

According to Cullen, "...in the great media blunders during the initial coverage of this story, where nearly everyone got the central factors wrong, I was among the guilty parties."

This author was one of the first journalists to arrive on the scene of the attack on Columbine High School. Cullen covered the story extensively but remained with and researched this story for nine years. He interviewed hundreds of people involved with this tragedy: students, parents, clergy, FBI psychologists, police, and others. He researched thousands of pages of police files as well as the boys' tapes and diaries. After reading this book I couldn't shake the thought, "They left signs everywhere"; how did everyone miss these signs? **READ this book!**

Yorktown Police Attend Training on Conducting Party Patrols

In late January, members of the Yorktown Police attend a seminar at Iona College in New Rochelle. The officers were learning techniques used during "party patrol" assignments.

The training provided information regarding the operational steps to prevent and disperse underage parties, and included a mock party dispersal exercise to practice these skills. This seven hour training explored the role of law enforcement and community agencies in preventing underage drinking parties as well as safely dispersing underage gatherings involving alcohol.

Officers have already put this training to use. In a party patrol this past weekend, they intervened in and dispersed a large underage party. The officers will continue to work with both schools and the community to help prevent underage drinking.

The Yorktown Police Department also conducts compliance checks and TIPS training, both focused on reducing commercial access to alcohol, and assists with ASK's Adopt-a-Store program.

For more information on programs that ASK sponsors, visit AllianceForSafeKids.org, email us at ASK4Kids@gmail.com.

-Art Lander, retired Yorktown Youth Officer and Youth Court Director

I was Outed, cont'd from pg 2

health issues, and damaged relationships. Better still would have been for that father to tell his son what he would have done differently and the kind of life he wants for his son. It is a very easy copout to claim "right of passage!" while we look the other way, and much more unnerving to take the hard line, especially if your teenager views your hard line as hypocritical ('you did it, and you're okay').

Undoubtedly there are shades of gray in this one, and what is going to work depends on you and your teen. What I admire about Ryan's parents is they were upfront about her dad's situation early on; it wasn't romanticized, either. On the other hand, I - who was outed - was actually more appalled about my actions than my children were, and that sent its own message to them. There are experts in the field who advise parents not to disclose at all. If you have 'history' and it hasn't come up yet, think about how you want to handle it so in case you're 'outed' you'll be ready. Like much of parenting, we need to be one step ahead of the situation and even then expect the unexpected.

Location, Location, Location



Art Lander has been out and about scouting locations for a home for a new Alliance For Safe Kids sign. The sign will give us some (more!) name recognition and can be used to promote upcoming events. Want to be part of a sweet real estate deal by helping to underwrite the purchase? Email us at ASK4Kids@gmail.com.



Neighborhood Watch Update

By Detective Sean Lewis

Over the winter it's sometimes easy to forget to double-check doors that we don't use regularly. Burglars don't tend to come up to the front door and try to force their way in – a back door is more private, and sometimes, unfortunately, left unlocked. Go through your house and check all doors and windows – make sure your house is secure!

We have had two burglaries in Yorktown this past week. The first was off Birdsell Drive. This one was solved pretty quickly through a “heads up” alert. Sgt. Graham, who had been responding to a call, noticed a couple of individuals waiting impatiently at a nearby County bus stop. They had the jewelry and were arrested. The victims were very lucky; their jewelry was recovered from the two suspects.

The other burglary was on Amelia Drive, off Stony Street in the Shrub Oak area. We are still investigating and have positive leads.

Whenever you notice any suspicious vehicles or people, please report them. You may save someone else – or yourself – from a break-in.

Thanks for any and all tips.

-Sean Lewis is a detective with the Yorktown Police Dept

Middle School Night at Solaris Saturday, February 27th

The party originally planned for December has been rescheduled. On February 27th, all 6th, 7th and 8th graders are invited to a **Music and Sports Party** to be held at Solaris Sports Clubs.

The event will include a music light show by DJ Kev, non-stop volleyball and basketball, and snacks to keep attendees energized!

Pre-registration can be made by email (ASK4Kids@gmail.com) or by calling the Alliance at (914-736-1450), and the entrance fee for this VIP list will be \$5. The event is limited to the first 300 registrants, and without pre-registration the entrance will be \$10, if the event is not already sold out.

The event will run from 8-10 PM. Solaris Sports Club is located at 201 Veterans Road in Yorktown Heights.

The event will be supervised by members of ASK, Solaris Sports Club and the Yorktown Leos Club. Any parents interested in helping, please contact ASK.

All proceeds will help underwrite ASK's programs.

Solaris Sports Clubs After-School Programs

Mondays-Thursdays,, from 2-4 PM, Solaris Sports Clubs will be offering supervised after-school activities for students aged 11 and older. Sports will include basketball, soccer, dodgeball, volleyball and team games. The cost is \$7.50 per child per day.

For more information call Solaris at (914) 962-4094.

To the Editor:

After any accident or injury, it is expected for family, friends and community to ask if we could have done anything to prevent the incident. For Yorktown residents, it may feel that we have had to face this question more than our fair share. Even one death, whether from a poor decision or pure chance, is one too many. This is true for every community and the reason that organizations work together to create a safety net for each other. When it comes to our children, the safety net is the strongest when the entire community participates. It is for this reason that many communities have developed coalitions. ***No community is immune to tragedy and no community is jinxed.*** Even with a safety net, there will be accidents and poor decisions, but with more awareness and education each community can work to increase safety and reduce risk factors.

For Yorktown, the Alliance for Safe Kids (ASK) has truly stepped up efforts with the hope to involve the community as a whole. Within a community there are numerous local, county-wide and state-wide resources available to teens and their families: however, the awareness of these resources is often limited. ASK is working to provide a comprehensive list of these resources, which will also be shared with surrounding communities.

Last year, Yorktown, as well as numerous other communities in Westchester and nationwide, participated in an extensive Prevention Needs Assessment youth survey of 8th, 10th and 12th graders. Yorktown's results for alcohol and drug use were slightly lower than the Westchester County average. However, we still seem to have a high-rate of accidents and injuries, with too many associated with drugs and alcohol.

ASK is working with our community to increase awareness that although many teens are making very good decisions, there should be a group effort to assist those who are putting themselves and others at great risk. This group effort is best met when including involvement from the twelve sectors in a community: faith, education, youth-serving organizations, healthcare, parents, business, civic, social work, media, government, law enforcement and especially our youth – as peers, siblings and role models.

ASK is dedicated to protecting Yorktown teens from the dangers of alcohol, drugs, gambling violence and any other destructive influences. We are in the final phase of a national program called Communities That Care. This process enables us to work with the community to determine risk factors, as well as analyze strengths and gaps, so that we can focus our efforts where they are most needed.

ASK is responsible for numerous programs in Yorktown including Youth Court, Teen Nights, Mentorships, Merchant Training, Community Service Liaison and Public Service Announcements(PSAs)/TV Programming. We are launching a community PSA Contest in March to involve all youths (ages 10-19) by participating in any of three venues: video, audio or drawing/photo.

Most importantly, ASK sponsors speakers, group panels, workshops and focus groups. Recent topics and events have included Teen Depression, Teen Drug and Alcohol Use, a Teen Speak, appearances by Mike Nerney (speaking with both parents and teens, in both school districts) an expert on substance abuse and development of the adolescent brain, and focus groups of both Lakeland and Yorktown parents, as well as faith leaders and coaches.

ASK also works with local businesses to sponsor safe teen nights. We recently held a dance sponsored by Club Fit and Yorktown Parks and Recreation for more than 185 middle school students, with chaperones from every sector in the community. We have another event coming up on February 27th at Solaris Sports Club; they will sponsor an evening with volleyball, basketball and a DJ.

ASK is always looking for adult and teen volunteers. Please get involved and be a part of the safety net. Visit our website at www.allianceforsafekids.org or contact us at ASK4Kids@gmail.com, 914-736-1450, or P.O. Box 106, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598.

Keeping kids safe... there is no effort more worthy!

-Tricy Cushner, President