



NEWSLETTER

As we approach the end of yet another school year, we are reminded of how quickly time goes by and how much we still want to accomplish. This issue of the newsletter is filled with Yorktown events that will warm your hearts and hopefully encourage you to get involved.

Summer is a perfect opportunity for parents to take a little extra time to raise and discuss delicate issues without the additional stress of schoolwork and lack of sleep. Please utilize information and links from both our newsletter and [website](#) to open up discussions between you and your teens. Some of these issues include alcohol, drugs, gambling, relationships, online safety and teen depression. We don't want our kids to learn from the wrong people or wrong experiences. Empower them with knowledge and continue to give them your time, presence, love and attention.

And if there's something you would like added to the newsletter, just contact us at ASK4Kids@gmail.com.

Tricy Cushner, president Cathryn Martin, director Cynthia Cervini, newsletter editor

Calendar

**Monday, June 21st
7 PM**

*Town memorial service for Joan Valenstein, Yorktown Stage, 1974
Commerce St,
Yorktown Heights*

**Tuesday, June 29th
4 PM-on**

*ASK coalition meeting at Cushner residence, 1989
Hunterbrook Road,
Yorktown Heights.
Quick poolside meeting followed by dinner and swimming. Friends, spouses, children and teens are all welcome!!!*

Sunday, July 18th

*Krazy Kids Day, Lakeside at Osceola.
See pg 5 for more info click [here](#)*

Joan Valenstein – a Friend Remembered

Yorktown's youth lost a strong advocate on May 13th. Joan Valenstein, a founder, board member, and past president of the Alliance for Safe Kids, gave voice often to one of the things that makes Yorktown great: its deep love and caring for the community's children.

The Alliance, founded by Joan and then-Town Supervisor Linda Cooper in 2002, started with a small but dedicated group of Yorktown business, government, and civic leaders. Through the years, ASK has expanded exponentially in both outreach and programs. Even when she was at her busiest, especially over the past two months, Joan was still adding her ideas and energy to the organization. In recognition of all her past work, Student Assistance Services, Corp., will be naming their annual youth leadership conference after her. In addition, the Alliance for Safe Kids Joan Valenstein Senior Award for Volunteerism is being given each year to a student from both Lakeland and Yorktown High Schools.

Joan will be missed for years to come, but her greatness of spirit will continue. Just as Kathy Quinn of Support Connection commented in a recent note to ASK, "I know that we all feel stronger than ever to continue her work -- doing whatever we must to keep our teens safe and help them make good decisions." The Alliance for Safe Kids agrees; the kindest way to honor someone's memory is to continue their good works. The children and community of Yorktown will truly benefit.

Click [here](#) to link to video tributes at the North County News' website, as well as Editor in Chief Bruce Apar's blog "Valentine for Valenstein". A town memorial service will be held at the Yorktown Stage, 1974 Commerce Street, on Monday, June 21st, at 7 PM.

Tuesdays at FINNEGAN'S GRILL

Tuesday nights at Finnegan's Grill are now fundraising nights for the Alliance for Safe Kids. A percentage of all food sold that evening will be donated to ASK each week by Finnegan's. So come and have a nice dinner and help support our programs! Finnegan's Grill is at 347 Downing Drive.

New Weapon in Drama's Arsenal

By Cynthia Cervini

It's Wednesday morning. Although the calendar says May, the temperature is more like July. Most of the guidance staff is away, leaving me and one other counselor to hold up the fort. Today we seem to be in a foxhole (albeit an air conditioned one) fighting a war on drama, the kind of drama that causes high school students to be reduced to mean-spirited caricatures of their usually pleasant selves. While the condition is usually temporary, sorting through some plotlines can make forty-five minutes seem like four to five hours. Dense drama involving multiple parties can take class periods or days to sort through. Today it's two of us vs. fourteen hundred of them and any one of them could detonate at any moment.

Already armed with texting, Facebook, and My Space, teens can now access a "nifty" little site to post anything, anonymously. It's Formspring, where you can open an online account for questions or comments from friends or adversaries alike; our very own WMD – Weapon of Mass Drama. In the Yorktown High newspaper The Voice, freshman Lily Cao describes this bullying
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Wednesdays at

Wednesday nights at Bob B Q's are now fundraising nights for ASK. A percentage of all guest checks that evening will be donated each week.

So come to Bob B Q's and help support our programs! They're located at 958 East Main Street in Shrub Oak.

What's on My Nightstand**What Your Mother Never Told You: A Survival Guide for Teenage Girls**

By Richard M. Dudum

Review by Tricy Cushner



I have yet to come across a parenting book as useful and informative as this one. Although the title describes "a survival guide for teen girls", the book should be read not only by parents and daughters, but sons as well. There is a wealth of information on their roles and responsibilities.

The author suggests that the book be read before your children enter high school, and then re-read on a regular basis as they move through their teenage years. As he points out, your teen will make their most difficult decisions when you are not present. If you want them to hear your words when you are not there, then you need to say them when you are.

Each of the 63 chapters (good news - each chapter is only a page or two long) empowered me to start discussing such delicate topics as: how they will be remembered after high school; changing friends; what your choice of clothes says about who you are; disrespectful boys/girls; sex; alcohol and other drugs; sexual assault; Facebook; webcams; and love. This is also the perfect book for your teens to read and discuss with their friends while you do the same with other parents.

The closing comments remind teens that life is a ride: in order to make it a beautiful journey you have to make adjustments along the way.

Please visit the book's [website](#), and contact ASK if you would like to borrow one of our many copies.

Tricy Cushner is a mother of three and president of ASK.

Thursdays at The Travelers Rest

Thursday nights at Travelers Rest are now fundraising nights for ASK. A percentage of all guest checks that evening will be donated to ASK each week by these businesses. Be sure to mention ASK during your meal. Travelers Rest is located on Route 100.

WISE Presentation - Stephanie Hines

On May 27th it was a pleasure to listen to Stephanie Hines, a senior at Walter Panas High School, present her experience as an intern with the Alliance for Safe Kids and Yorktown Police Department during her Walter Panas Individualized Senior Experience (WISE) Program presentation. The program required her to research and intern in her field of interest while meeting with her class adviser, and her final project for the program was a presentation of her experience to a room filled with faculty, peers and sponsors. Stephanie's experience as a member of the ASK Youth Court for the past three years helped her decide to attend the University of New Haven where she plans to major in criminal justice with a minor in sociology. She did a tremendous job and we can't wait hear of her future accomplishments. Thank you, Stephanie, for all of your dedication and hard work!

Youth Court 2010

The ASK Yorktown Youth Court has completed another successful year of service. If you are interested in more information or would like to join our Youth Court, please visit our [website](#).

Remembering Community Day 2010

By Art Lander

The word *community* has been defined as a [group](#) of interacting people living in a common location. It can also be a group organized around common values and goals, which perfectly describes the event that is our town's Community Day. At this year's event our community came together to celebrate our town as well as mourn the loss of a great leader.

Our community suffered the tragic loss of the founder of the Yorktown Community Day just before this year's event. Joan Valenstein was the founder of our Community Day; but then again, every day was community day for Joan Valenstein. She was the driving force that brought us together to help make this community a better and safer place.

One of the goals of community day is keeping our youth safe, and this year the Alliance for Safe Kids teamed up with the Yorktown Police to help educate our local teens on staying safe while driving. A major safety concern is texting while driving. A study by AAA discovered that 46% of teens admitted to being distracted behind the wheel due to texting. The average text read, or the response, takes the driver's eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At highway speeds they would have cleared a football field.

So this year, with the assistance of the Yorktown Central School District, we were able to do a "Texting While Driving" program. We set up a course where youths would drive a golf cart while texting under the supervision of a police officer. The first time thru the course drivers were not allowed to text and the officer observed their driving. The second time, they were told to drive the cart while texting a message to someone on the sidelines. They were scored for each time they had to stop, or struck any of the cones, or went off the course entirely! Many tried and all failed to negotiate the course while driving and texting.

The Alliance for Safe Kids and Yorktown Police will continue to work together to keep our youth safe through our programs. Keeping Joan Valenstein's dream of a safe community alive takes a commitment by each and everyone of us, and every day should be community day in Yorktown.

-Art Lander is director of the ASK Yorktown Youth Court and is a former DARE and Youth Officer with the Yorktown Police Department.



*Special Projects Director
Art Lander and Lakeland
High School Awardee
Samantha Wechsler*

Awards Ceremonies Recognize Students

The Alliance for Safe Kids 2010 Joan Valenstein Volunteer Award was given to two students last week.

On June 18th, Lakeland High School senior Samantha Wechsler was recognized for her work as a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, as well as local volunteer projects to win her Silver Award for Girl Scouts. She donated time at St. Mary's food pantry, worked at Temple Beth Am on a tutoring and community service project, and served as editor of her school newspaper.



*Yorktown High School
Awardee Giana DiMaria*

On June 19th, the award was given to Yorktown

High School senior Giana DiMaria. Giana worked closely with ASK to complete her Girl Scout Gold Award by planning a series of safe middle school teen nights in Yorktown. Giana completed mentoring classes for nutrition and self image and assisted with ASK activities and contests during the Yorktown Community Day.

We wish both Samantha and Giana all the best!

It was such a pleasure to once again team up with the Yorktown PBA and Leos to help raise funds for the American Cancer Society. Each year dozens of volunteers from all three organizations gather to cook up and sell food to Relay attendees; this year we were



joined by middle school volunteers selling desserts, as well!

It's a wonderful, life-affirming event, and we're already looking forward to the Relay in 2011. Thank you to all the volunteers who made this event such a tremendous success!



The Yorktown PBA cooked up a storm!

Relay for Life 2010



Yorktown Leos get ready for the crowds







Busy ASK volunteers

F is for Formspring

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as “catching on like wildfire ... users can be asked anything by anyone under the thick shield of anonymity - the perfect vehicle for teenage bullies.” Even while upsetting, some teens still find themselves logging in. One girl’s experience is described by her mother in an [article](#) in the New York Times: “She was very, very upset ... She’s always been self-conscious, and in a way this just flushed out what people might [have] been thinking all along ... But there’s a kind of obsessiveness to it. She still wants to read everything.”

The “wildfire”-like quality of Formspring means that if I heard about it on Monday at 8 AM, by Tuesday at 3 PM I needed to know how it worked to handle the fallout. My initiation to the site: three girls and a boy argued via text about a rather nasty anonymous post by Girl #1 on the boy’s account. Girl #1 attributed the post to Girl #2, who arrived in my office with Girl #3 along for support. Girl #2 was frantic that the boy didn’t believe her, and would not rest until the truth was out. Class time was missed, friendships stretched, and emotions ran high. On Thursday I woke at 3 AM curious about Formspring. I logged on and searched to see if  * owned an account - naturally, always on the cutting edge, she did. I have to say it was pretty much as expected. A lot of questions, quite a few of them rather vile, but curiously  didn’t seem bothered by any and answered in a rather humorous way. One that caught my attention (and was inoffensive enough to actually print here) went something like: “how come you hate pot and people that smoke it?”  countered with “I don’t hate anybody, just think it is really stupid and a waste of time.” I could say the same about Formspring.

Thursday morning I asked Girl #3 how the incident earlier in the week turned out. Not good. Even after Girl #1 admitted via text to Girl #2 that she posted the comment, the boy refused to think anyone but #2 was responsible for the dirty deed. I asked what could possibly motivate someone to set up a Formspring account in the first place. She, like most students I asked, saw no redeeming purpose in it and summed it up rather insightfully: “If you want to hear something nice about yourself you hang out with your friends; if you want to open yourself up to nasty comments you get a Formspring account.” Voice writer Cao quotes another Yorktown student: “If you feel like you are being treated unfairly online, sign off. It’s as simple as that.” Sage advice. I’m often asked why I let my son, newly thirteen, have a Facebook page, which is not allowed for anybody under sixteen. Here is my take on social networking where my two are concerned. The second, no, the **nano second** there is any whiff of drama in whatever venue, said venue is gone, adiós, out of here, don’t let the screen door hit you in the back as you erase your profile. So far we’ve been okay but I could banana-peel on that comment at any time. But don’t look up  on Formspring anytime soon. The afternoon after my look-see into her account I asked her about the (ahem) less than acceptable questions people asked her. Even though it turned out that many were asked by a good friend (with a questionable sense of humor), I asked her to erase the account. I told her I was writing about it and unless she wanted a bunch of parents looking at it she might consider removing it. When I went to remind her a day later it was already gone. No fuss, no muss.

I’m encouraged that so many of the students I talk to think Formspring is ‘stupid’. By the time I followed up with Girl #3 to find out how the drama went down, she’d already erased her profile as well. Life for adolescents isn’t easy under optimal conditions; why open yourself up to more grief? Cao ended her Voice article with an insightful observation: “Social networking websites are made what they are by the users who populate them.... In the end, the fault should be placed on the people behind the words, not the websites that shield them.” The article should be required reading for ‘drama’ majors.

*For those who may not have read the April 2010 newsletter,  is my 16-yr-old daughter.

Cynthia Cervini is a Yorktown High School guidance counselor and mother of two teenagers who has one foot firmly planted on a banana peel while wearing a skate on the other foot.