



Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 14
November, 2009

Autumn is flying past - Homecoming has come and gone and Thanksgiving is only a few weeks away. The colder weather is also a harbinger of winter activities, including college applications.

As children grow and stretch their wings, readying to leave the nest, it's sometimes hard to remember that our main job as adults in our community is to be guardians – of both their safety and development – to all our kids. But at some point we need to give them the gentle release they need to fly away on their own, secure in knowing that we've given them the tools they need to be safe and healthy.

As a community member, there may be things that worry you, that you think may need to be changed in our community to help other families raise their children safely. Or you may come upon a piece of wisdom that helps you help your children gain their footing. ASK has received a Drug Free Communities grant, and a project we're pursuing under that grant is to reach out to all members of the community to gather concerns and wisdom to help keep our kids – and families – safe. We are going to be conducting parent focus groups, inviting parents from both the Yorktown and Lakeland school districts to meet on Nov. 19th and 20th to discuss these issues. If you're interested in being part of those focus groups, please let one of us know.

This month's newsletter is dedicated to community guardianship – from clearer communications within our families to helping local businesses ensure our kids' safety.

And before we sign off, we'd like to extend an enormous Thank You to Club Fit and the Yorktown Parks and Rec Department. Thanks to these two organizations, more than 185 middle school students from the Yorktown and Lakeland School Districts (including St. Patrick's and Elizabeth Ann Seton) enjoyed a terrific evening of dancing, basketball, and just healthy socializing on October 23rd, benefitting ASK. Our next newsletter will have information about more events, currently in the planning stages, like this.

Tricy Cushner, President

Cathryn Martin, Director

Calendar

Saturday, Nov 7th

7pm-midnight

DARE benefit – a

Comedy Night. Yorktown

Elks Lodge, Waverly

Road, Yorktown

Thurs, Nov 19th, 10 am

Yorktown Schools parents

focus group, location

TBD

Fri, Nov 20th, 10 am

Lakeland Schools parents

focus group, Location

TBD

Doing the New Math

By Art Lander

I was never a Rhodes Scholar when it came to dealing with math. When I was in high school, the mere mention of a math exam would send me into a frenzy.

That's the reason I became a police officer; I figured the worst math I would have to deal with was a speeding ticket.

For the past five years, I have been working two different sides of the same coin: the enforcement of underage drinking laws, and education of vendors (waiters and waitresses, bartenders, convenience store staff, business owners) in our community about those laws. I have realized that I am not alone in having issues with the math. It appears that many clerks at our local businesses are having trouble with their math skills, especially when it comes to checking ID's.

Now, I will say for the record that our community is doing a fine job checking for underage patrons, due to great work by the Yorktown Police Department and the Alliance for Safe Kids. Working as a team, representatives from both

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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 Alliance_for_Safe_Kids@yahoo.com, visit our website, www.AllianceForSafeKids.org

When did No become the New Yes?

By Cynthia Cervini

My son appears to be unacquainted with the concept of **No**. I'm not quite sure how this transpired as he was brought up with **No**. **No** was with us at mealtimes ("No, grape jelly is not a fruit"), went to the supermarket ("No, mixing Fruit Loops and Frosted Flakes will not make a well-balanced breakfast"), on vacation ("No swimming past the buoys"). Heck, I was even considering an addition on the house so **No** would have a room of its own.

More than not understanding no, my son feels that **no** is just a local stop on a train heading for **yes**, a weigh station eventually leading to the "Sure! Go ahead and do what you want!" highway. It took awhile before I was able to follow his thought pattern, but a typical encounter sounds something like this:

"Mom, I found a track in Kingston where I can race go karts. Can we go there this weekend?"

I should probably set the scene. When he comes up with these seemingly innocent little requests I'm either:

- a) on the phone
- b) at work, or
- c) asleep (he is not above waking me up to outline his case).

I believe it's part of his bigger master diabolical plan to sneak attack while I'm distracted.

In this particular instance, while I was cooking dinner I made sure that he understood that **no**, this weekend was already booked up and besides, **no**, Kingston is too far to drive for an eight-minute go kart race. No higher level math necessary here; I said no twice, believing that two no's plus one explanation should cover it. It seemed to me that **No** and I got the job done. My son seemed to accept the answer, so it was much to my surprise when he said, two days later,

"I know we're busy this weekend so when are you going to take me go kart racing at that track?"

Well, turns out the track isn't in Kingston, it's actually in Mt. Kisco, much closer to us and even closer to my Yorktown sister-in-law's where we were headed in the first place. So, best I could tell, **No** was thrown out on a technicality. So if you happened to be at Grand Prix New York Racing in Mt. Kisco last Saturday, you would have seen him out on the track thinking "how did Cindy and **No** end up here?"

Here is another ploy. He'll act like he's doing research:

"If I trade in my _____ (fill in the blank with a game he had to have a week ago that I paid for) and pay ten dollars I could get _____ (fill in the blank with this week's must-have game)."

Now for the tricky part: if one nods, acknowledging what he's said, perhaps adding an "ok" affirming the aforementioned research, he'll then wait about five minutes before asking (and here is where we cut to the puppy dog face),

"So... when are we going to Gamestop?"

It isn't just me, either. New York State finds itself in the same situation with its teens. A recent survey finds that two-thirds of teens indicated adults in their neighborhoods disapprove of teen substance abuse and... wait - hold on - does that translate into one third **not** opposed? Back to the survey: in addition to that

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When Did No ...

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statistic, almost half of teens (49%) believe their parents **don't** feel it is wrong for them to engage in behaviors such as stealing and fighting.

Say what?? 100% of the parents I know would argue that point. Let's reread that survey: two thirds of teens **indicated...** almost half of teens **believe...**

Well, that changes things. Ask my son what he **believes** I'm thinking about that dirt bike he has asked me to buy him for his birthday. While I may say the matter is up for negotiation, he **believes** negotiation is best defined as 'it's a go'. Kids take unclear attitudes and magically morph them into support. Not saying no is saying yes by default. How many times have I heard 'well, you didn't tell me **not to**'? The little things like mixing Fruit Loops and Frosted Flakes don't matter quite as much as the weighty issues - drugs, alcohol, stealing, fighting, you know the list I'm talking about. Kids have to know where we stand. It isn't enough to assume they'll get it. We need to tell them.

And tell them.

More than once.

Because they all run around with these wires coming out of their heads so they can listen to music and not to us. Even without the wires, don't expect much in the way of auditory miracles... for they're texting, or doing homework and don't interrupt them. You need to stalk your prey and get them at exactly the right time, maybe dinner or in the car (and even then you might run into those earbud things). Sooner or later, you'll get them.

When they complain "*I've heard that speech a hundred times, Mom*", then, and only maybe then, is the message getting through.

Cynthia Cervini is a guidance counselor and mother who has been known to give the same speech in excess of 100 times.

Superheroes

By Bryelle Burgus

While going through the day in high school, you hear some interesting things. Gossip, lies, people plans or things people have done. Most of this goes unnoticed. This theory proved true in my sixth period bio class the other day. You see, we'd had a substitute teacher the day before, so when our teacher came back it was a little hectic. Anyways, she told us to get into groups. As we settled in, people began to chatter and talk while doing our work. As anyone would, our teacher became slightly annoyed and told us to stop talking. She said, "No talking unless it has something to do about the work. All I heard in first period was about the awesome" [sarcastically said] "underage drinking that went on this weekend." I looked around (paying attention to my work of course), and noticed that no one found that shocking. I mean, shouldn't it be strange that young adults are chugging down beer and alcohol at a young age? So this whole experience got me thinking, WHY ISN'T THIS SHOCKING?!?!

So being the curious person I am, I quickly looked up things online. I was shocked at some results that I found about under-age drinking. One fact I thought was interesting was about teens and their older siblings. I found that among teens and young adults who have older siblings who don't like alcohol or other drugs use, there's a lower rate of use than among teens who have older siblings who do drink alcohol or do other drugs.

Now, I know you're probably thinking "well yea, duh" but listen to the next part.

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New Math ...*Cont'd from pg 1*

groups have met with local merchants, instructing them in the TIPS program. TIPS trains servers and sellers of alcohol how to prevent intoxication, drunk driving and underage drinking. Despite all of this, there are still businesses that are having trouble with the math issues.

Here's the math problem: you have to be 21 years old to consume or purchase alcohol legally in New York State. Any server, bartender or store owner must - by law - ask for identification to prove that a customer is of legal age to obtain alcohol. Even though they *are* checking the ID's, they are still having problems due to, you guessed it, math skills. The simple fact is that, although they are reading the ID's, they are still selling to minors. When asked, the clerk will often be very sure that the purchaser was over 21 ... after all, they looked at the date of birth and subtracted it from today's date.

What makes matters worse is that on the New York State driver's license, if the bearer is under age it states in large red letters "Under 21". The vendors don't even have to do the math - they just need to check for those letters.

The answer to this equation is to continue to educate all of our businesses to take time to check all ID's, do the math correctly - or at least see that wording - and not sell alcohol to minors in our community. As my math teacher always said, "Math is Power." And we have the power to make it happen in our community.

Art Lander, Director of the ASK Yorktown Youth Court, is a retired Yorktown Youth Officer.

Congratulations and Thank You!

To staff members from

South Side Grille, Yorktown

Southside Grill, Mahopac

Hanlon's Steak House

Somers Tavern

who took our TIPS training in March. All attendees passed the exam with flying colors!

Working together, we can truly keep our kids safe.

Superheroes*Cont'd from pg 3*

Teens who think that their older sibling would be very angry with them are at a 50% lower risk of doing drugs and alcohol than teens who have an older sibling who wouldn't care. Think about that, 50%!! That alone cuts the rate in half!

The next day, all these facts are buzzing around in my head, blowing my mind. So during my health class, I started jotting down a list, (still paying attention of course) of people I know who have an older sibling. I began to ask each and every one of them if their sibling either doesn't care, or doesn't want them to use alcohol. To my surprise I saw repeated results. As this theory states, each and every one of them who has an older sibling who doesn't want them doing alcohol steers clear of it; and the others, the ones whose siblings don't care, are usually found at a party with alcohol. The fact that this is true boggled my mind.

I still can't believe how much power older siblings can have on the younger. All you ever hear about is "Oh, I don't care what my brother or sister thinks or does." But this proves that deep down...they do. So if you have an older brother or sister (or half-brother or half-sister or whatever it could possibly be), as hard as it is to conceive, you look up to them and you obey them (to a certain extent of course). So now, siblings are superheroes and biology classes are mind openers. So what are you? A super hero or a super zero?

Bryelle is a sophomore at YHS and routinely checks closets for Narnia.