



# *Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc.*

## **NEWSLETTER**

Issue No. 1, October 2008

**Welcome to our new ASK newsletter!** A lot of activity is going on these days, and rather than fill your email inbox with different flyers and notices, we're working to condense all the information into a one- or two-page monthly newsletter; this first newsletter is longer, to incorporate a very special – and timely - article by Cynthia Cervini, Guidance Counselor at Yorktown High School.

Our calendar will list all upcoming panel discussions, coalition meetings, Teen Nights, Middle School Nights, and other activities sponsored by ASK. For your convenience, we've added morning and evening coalition meetings, hoping that you'll be able to find one that works with your schedule. The ASK coalition includes any individual who is interested in keeping our youth out of harm's way.

Please call (914) 736-1450 with any information you'd like added to future news- letters. In the meantime, read on – we're sure there's at least one event here that will interest you!

Tricy Cushner, President      Cathryn Adler, Director

### **Calendar**

**Wednesday, October 29<sup>th</sup>**

**5:30 PM: ASK coalition meeting,**  
*Rochambeau Room, Mercy College*

**7 PM: Teens, Parents,**  
**Alcohol/Drugs & the Law panel,**  
*Rochambeau Room, Mercy College*

**Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>**

**7-9 PM: Week One, 2008-2009 ASK**  
**Youth Court training,** *Yorktown*  
*Community Cultural Center*

**Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>:**

**7-10 PM: Middle School teen night,**  
*Yorktown Boys & Girls Club,*  
*Yorktown Community Cultural Center*

**Wednesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>:**

**10 AM: ASK coalition meeting,**  
*7 Stars Restaurant, Shrub Oak*

**Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>:**

**4 PM: ASK coalition meeting,**  
*Sparkle Lake community building*

***As a parent, what's my responsibility if my kid hosts a party with alcohol and someone gets hurt?***

On Wednesday, Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, ASK will present a panel discussion on **Teens, Parents, Alcohol/Drugs and the Law**. The event will be held at Mercy College at 7 PM. Panelists will include Westchester DA Janet DiFiore, Student Assistance Services Executive Director Ellen Morehouse, Salvatore Lagonia, Esq., SROs Julie Vicinanza and Scott Sage, and RNs Justine Rice and Sandy Way from Northern Westchester Hospital. Please come – this is an extremely important event!

***All rise!***

***The 2008-2009 ASK Youth Court is now in session!***

With the beginning of the new school year, Youth Court has reconvened and already heard the first case of the season. Meanwhile, the third class of Youth Court members has entered training. The Court is comprised of Yorktown teens, hearing misdemeanor cases involving fellow Yorktown teens. For further information about the Court, please contact Youth Court Director Art Lander at (914) 736-1450.

**Recent Death Prompts PTSA Meeting With Experts*****By Cynthia Cervini, Guidance Counselor, Yorktown High School***

**"If you have proof, assume the worst."** A group of seventy parents listened intently as Suzie Wilson, mother of Christopher, a YHS graduate, shared the story of her son's downfall and recovery from addiction. "Broken hearts don't get mended. I hope you never have to go through what I went through" offered Saul Lichtine, whose son Seth, a 2000 YHS graduate, died from an overdose of prescription medication. "We were naïve," Wilson admitted. "I knew so little but I had to become educated **fast**".

Education and parental awareness is exactly what the Alliance for Safe Kids (ASK) had in mind when they quickly moved to develop an informational evening forum in response to the desperate pleas of parents when over the past nine months two local teens lost their lives due to possible drug involvement. Karen Profita, Yorktown school district social worker and an ASK board member, knew that parents needed to hear from a variety of sources so she assembled a panel that included Dr. Saul Lichtine, who tragically lost a son to drug use, as well as Suzy and Chris Wilson Sr., who shared the story of their son's addiction and recovery. Rounding out the panel were Davia Bugge, Student Assistance Counselor, and School Resource Office Tommy Nadoraski, both from YHS. The event was co-sponsored by the Yorktown PTSA.

Illegal drug use, and its horrible impact, isn't just a Yorktown problem. The Westchester County Medical Examiner's office reported 2,334 overdoses in the county last year. Yorktown Police have responded to six overdoses in as many weeks.

"I told my children, with recent events that have transpired in the community, I have the right to be nervous" one parent explained. Another parent wanted to hear what to look for, and what other families have experienced. Their stories were both educational and poignant. Lichtine moved listeners when he warned them, "Love is blind and terrible things happen when you don't realize what is going on around you" and stressed the need for parents to be vigilant. "Drug users have PhDs in hiding their use", and it never dawned on Lichtine that his son could be stealing pills from home and sharing them with friends. Wilson agreed. "You have to be the best detective to see the subtle warning signs."

What can a parent watch for? Suzie Wilson stressed that parents should look for changes in friends and sudden loss of interest in activities, hobbies or sports that used to be enjoyable, as well as declining grades and change of appearance, sleeping and eating habits. Student Assistance Counselor Bugge told parents that some of these are just part of the normal changes that adolescents go through, but if you see "two, three, four of these signs it could mean something is going on." Officer Nadoraski urged parents to check their children when they come home. "My mom used to hug me each time I came in" he quipped. "Now I realize she was smelling me and patting me down."

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***PTSA Meeting, continued from page 2***

Sleepovers are especially problematic because it's easier for kids to lie about where they are or what they are doing. Wilson, now wiser, makes her younger children call from the house phone where they are staying overnight. Bugge thinks sleepovers during the high school years are best avoided: "your children could be staying in homes where parents have different values than your own."

Parents listened in surprise as Student Resource Officer Nadoraski presented the assembled group with some of the alarming drug trends among teenagers in the community. The abuse and misuse of prescription drugs is "through the roof". Teens are taking Xanax, Ritalin, Adderal and Ambien, all of which can be lifted from a home medicine cabinet and then taken or shared with friends.

To complicate matters, teens combine prescription drugs with alcohol, over-the-counter drugs or just simple soft drinks to enhance the effect. Nadoraski warned parents that while they wouldn't think something like a non-prescription cough syrup could be abused, the reality is that kids are drinking 25x the recommended dosage to obtain a desired high. The danger is that teens consider over-the-counter products to be "medicine" and less harmful than street drugs. To make matters worse, they are easily obtainable, legal to buy and cheaper than illegal drugs. Nadoraski advised that in

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looking for physical signs (dilated pupils or bloodshot, dry, glassy wide open eyes, jittery, hyper or lethargic disoriented behavior) parents should also regularly check their teen's Myspace and/or Facebook pages where students will boast of 'skittling, pharming, or robo.'" He urged parents to contact him if they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases when they check these social websites. Parents should be aware, he cautioned, "that a big influx of heroin has been coming through Yorktown" and the surrounding communities. Young people using tend to smoke or snort heroin, since injecting the drug is considered 'dirty'.

It isn't all bad news though; Nadoraski explained that the town is taking a "much stronger and more aggressive stance" than in years past. Both the town and the county have highly trained undercover officers purchasing from dealers, which has already resulted in increased arrests and a higher conviction rate. Nadoraski concluded his presentation with a grim 'show and tell' display of drugs and paraphernalia associated with drug use.

It is not enough to know what the trends are and what signs to look for. What should parents do if they suspect drug use by their own or someone else's child? Bugge offered a number of suggestions. First and foremost, enlist the help of others. She handed out list of local resources for information and referrals. "Drug tests," she cautioned parents "are effective but

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***PTSA Meeting, continued from page 3***

limited in what they can test for and can be altered. They are a tool, but shouldn't be the only tool." Any drug counselor or program should include therapy to address the physical aspects of addiction as well as the emotional component which may have led to the addiction in the first place.

All the professionals and the parents in attendance agreed that communication is key - not only communication between parent and child but also among parents. Wilson suggested parents agree on curfews, house rules and rely on each other for information. One parent interjected, "if our circle of kids is drinking, we need to back each other up." Yorktown High School Principal Joseph DeGennaro is willing to take communication one step further. "If we as a school have credible evidence that a student is using, we have no problem having a conversation with the student and their parents" he said in reference to himself, Profita and Bugge. "If someone is uncomfortable with their name being used, we won't reveal sources," he promised; "we'll do it anyway you want." "Partnership is why we are here" he elaborated. "This is a problem that will get better when kids and parents realize there is follow-through".

Barbara and Mark Loftus were just one set of parents who felt the meeting was timely and informative. "We [parents] should meet like this monthly. This should be an ongoing conversation." Fortunately for local parents, ASK is sponsoring another such event. **Teens, Parents, Alcohol/Drugs and the Law** will be held on Wednesday, October 29 at 7:30 pm at Mercy College. This seminar will bring parents and teens together to learn from a panel of local police, district attorneys, lawyers and police officers about the legal responsibilities and liabilities relating to underage drinking and drug use, DWI, and hosting underage parties where drinking or drug use occurs.

***Resources:***

*Information and Referral (914) 591-HELP (Student Assistance Services)*

*Student Assistance Counselor Yorktown High School (914) 243-8037*

*Student Assistance Counselor Lakeland High School (914) 528-0600 ext 272*

*School Resource Officer Yorktown High School (914) 243-2402*

*School Resource Officer Lakeland High School (914) 528-0600 (main number)*

*Student Assistance Counselor Mildred E. Strang Middle School (914) 243-8181*

*Student Assistance Counselor Copper Beach Middle School (914) 245-1885 ext 206*

*School Resource Officer Mildred E. Strang Middle School (914) 455-3011*

*School Resource Officer Copper Beach Middle School (914) 245-1885 ext 260*

*Additional resources can be found at ASK's website, [www.AllianceForSafeKids.org](http://www.AllianceForSafeKids.org)*

*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 [Alliance4SafeKids@yahoo.com](mailto:Alliance4SafeKids@yahoo.com), or write to PO Box 106, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598.*

***Many thanks to the Yorktown community for making the  
2008 Taste of Yorktown ... and Beyond! an enormous success!***

Bob B Q's ♥ Campagna Restaurant ♥ D. Bertoline & Sons ♥ Dreamcakes Bakery  
Finnegan's Grill Freyer's Florists ♥ Ginny's Wine & Liquors ♥ Hacienda Sauza  
Hanada Hibachi ♥ Hanlon's Steak House ♥ Julianna's Justin Thyme ♥ Little Sorrento  
Manhattan Beer Distributors ♥ Matilde's International ♥ Murphy's Restaurant Okinawa  
Sushi ♥ Panera Bread ♥ Peekskill Brewery ♥ Peter Pratt's Inn  
Photography by Una ♥ Piatto Grill ♥ South Side Grill ♥ Starbucks  
Suburban Wines & Spirits ♥ The Heights Bistro ♥ The Travelers Rest  
Tim Profita & Turco's ♥ Yorktown Wine & Liquors ♥ 44 Tapas Lounge  
and BOCES students, members of the Yorktown Youth Court,  
Yorktown High School musicians, and all the teen volunteers  
Special thanks to The Field Home for the elegant venue



**You've had a sampling, now indulge!**

**44 Tapas Lounge would like to invite all *Taste of Yorktown* attendees to come in and experience all we have to offer ... Great food, fantastic drink specials, a happening bar, and fun and interesting conversation with our staff and friends!**

**Present this coupon between now and Dec 18, 2008 and enjoy a 10% discount off your entire bill!**

**Reservations recommended.**

**44 Tapas Lounge**

**Winner – “Best Tapas” *Westchester Magazine Best of 2008***

**44 Maple Street  
Croton-on-Hudson NY 10520  
914-271-2690**