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# Parenting for Prevention

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Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, December, 2012

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The PowerToTheParent.org was launched in early December. This website was the collaborative effort of the Westchester County Office of Drug Prevention and STOP DWI, the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth and Prevention First-New York!

Special thanks go to Lauren Amsterdam and her team at Amsterland who designed an inviting, informative and stunning website. Please take a look and send any comments or ideas to the website address: LetsDoThis@PowerToTheParent.org.

My wish for 2013 is that other communities will join the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth so that together, we can make our county a safer place for teens and their families.

**Editor: Patricia Murphy Warble, MSW, CPP**

## PowerToTheParent.org Is launched

The November issue of this newsletter described the new website that is now available to parents to help keep their teens safe and healthy. The website, PowerToTheParent.org, has been launched by the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth and is up and running. Statistics from recent surveys taken by Westchester students about their drug and alcohol use and surveys about parental attitudes towards their children's drug use demonstrated the need for a website like this. There is a disconnect between what students say they are doing and what parents think they are doing. There is also a disconnect between what parents think they are telling their teens about the dangers of substances and what students believe their parents think.

A postcard with the following message was recently sent to parents in Westchester to let them know about this new, important resource.



**Power To The Parent helps Westchester parents learn how to help keep teens safe and healthy. Please visit our website at [www.PowerToTheParent.org](http://www.PowerToTheParent.org)**

- **The Parent Toolkit provides useful tips**
- **Get the facts about drugs and alcohol**
- **Understand the laws that affect Westchester families**
- **Learn the warning signs**
- **And more resources to empower you**

**Get involved. Stay involved. Help them slip safely past that terrible and deadly 15th minute.**

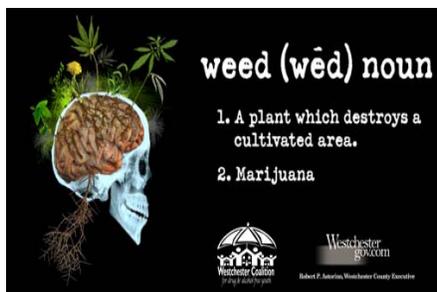
One of the most critical elements that is addressed in the website is the fact that parents should not, under any circumstances, be serving, providing, enabling or condoning alcohol and other drug use by their teens. When teens perceive parental approval of teen's use of alcohol and other drugs, they are more likely to use substances. More and more information from the latest imaging techniques shows the vulnerability of the teenage brain to addiction and that using alcohol and other drugs during this time impedes teens from developing the social and emotional coping skills that one needs to address the challenges that may come their way.

Another important goal of the information on the website is to convince and help parents understand how important it is for parents to develop the confidence and courage to state their position that they do not want their children to use alcohol and other drugs. Parents need to share with their teens the legal and health and safety consequences as a result of underage drinking and other drugs use. In addition if a teen does use substances, then the parent needs to be ready and willing to impose consequences for that behavior and follow through with them.

The website, which was designed by Lauren Amsterdam and her team at Amsterland divided the website into four areas. The first header is titled **“About”** and features a letter from County Executive Robert Astorino and offers information about the

coalition and the mission of the website. It also has a current list and contact information of all the coalitions who are members of the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth. If your community has an active substance abuse prevention coalition, council or school-based committee you are invited to join this group and also be listed on the website. To be added to the list contact PWarble@sascorp.org.

Finally, this area includes the campaigns that have been done in the past few years by the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth.



In most cases, these countywide campaigns can have the names of individual coalitions put on them and distributed to individual communities or school districts.

The next area is called the **“Parent Toolkit”** and offers an incredible amount of valuable information that will inform, support, and empower parents with practical ideas about ways to protect their teen from alcohol and other drug use.



It also includes the following; *How To Talk To Your Teen, 20 Tips To Keep Your Teen Safe, Myths and Facts, and ways to Empower Your Teens With Refusal Skills.* In addition this area also includes information about laws and how to discard unused medication throughout the county.

**“Events and Resources”** is the third area and includes a calendar that gives information about trainings, workshops and presentations that are scheduled. Other resources are also available like this newsletter, useful articles, and ideas for the faith community.

Finally, **“Contact”** describes how to reach us. We look forward to hearing from you at LetsDoThis@PowerToTheParent.org.

Also, follow us at [www.facebook.com/PowerToTheParent](http://www.facebook.com/PowerToTheParent) to gain helpful tips, news which affects families and teens, and much more

# Challenges Of The Holidays

There are many challenges during the holiday season. The holidays can be very emotional, they can create stressful situations where families get overwhelmed, work too hard to have a nice celebration, spend too much money or have unrealistic expectations about the holidays. They can also be difficult when there has been the loss of a loved one or an absent family member

## Alcohol Availability

At this time of year it is not unusual for adults and teens to be attending the same functions where alcohol is often available. As a result, teens have more access to alcohol at this time of year. Supervision of alcohol and youth can be a real challenge. Youth can access alcohol that has been placed on a table where there is no supervision. There may be someone serving drinks who is not monitoring drink orders, so a young person who asks for a drink for a parent could be consuming the alcohol. At a crowded party setting it can be difficult for parents to keep track of their children.

## Role Modeling

It can be upsetting for young people to see adults consuming a significant amount of alcohol as part of holiday celebrations or driving under the influence. When parents drink and drive, teens may think that it is okay for them to do the same. To offset the impact of this reality, parents can be pro-active in terms of keeping their teens safe and healthy during the holiday period. First and foremost, try to be a good role model for your teens and if you are not, admit that you have made some unhealthy choices but want your children to be healthier than you.

Also talk about the ways in which the holidays can be a difficult time for some people and that they may look to alcohol or other drugs to help them socialize or as a way to deal with stress, unhappiness or depression. Brainstorm with children better and healthier ways to deal with these issues and point out that alcohol is a depressant and that it can actually aggravate these conditions.

Remember, what you permit, you promote. Set a clear and consistent “no use” message about drugs and alcohol. In particular, let your children know that just because it is the holiday time and many of the adults around them are drinking, it is your expectation that they will not drink and explain that an adult has developed physically and emotionally but a teen has not.

It is also important for young people to realize that small amounts of alcohol or other drugs can impair a young person and cause them to fall or have other accidents that could result in serious consequences. There is also concern about the growing misuse of prescription drugs among

teens and adults and young people may not realize that just taking one pill could impact them in a very serious and destructive way.

In addition to these suggestions, there are additional things that parents can do to keep adolescents safe during the holiday period.

- Begin by making sure that your teens are in a safe and chaperoned environment. When teens are “home alone” they are more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol and engage in other risky behaviors.
- Consider signing a “Contract for Life” with your teen. This contract is between a parent and teen and states that parents agree to pick up a teen who needs a safe ride home or provide cab fare with no questions asked. The goal is to keep children safe for the moment and other concerns can be dealt with at a later date. The contract is available on the Internet at [www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org).
- Clean out medicine cabinets so prescription and non-prescription drugs are not available to guests using your bathrooms.
- Teens who babysit are often forced with the dilemma of riding home with an intoxicated employer or telling that employer that they will have someone pick them up or are meeting

people nearby. All parents need to discuss with teens who babysit options for getting home safely. Parents should let their teen know where they are during the evening when their child is babysitting and let them know that that you are available to come and pick them up. Make sure your child understands, that no matter how embarrassing the situation, under no circumstances should they get into a car with someone who has been drinking or under the influence of another drug.

## Preparing For New Year's Eve

Studies show that the holiday season is one of the highest alcohol consumption periods of the year and provides a teachable moment for all parents to discuss alcohol use with children and teens.

It is valuable to have a discussion with your teen about your family values about alcohol use as an accompaniment to a celebration or as a beverage with a meal, versus

alcohol being used as a drug to relax and reduce inhibitions that may result in embarrassing behaviors, relationship problems, addiction, and serious health and legal consequences.

Know where your children are and who they'll be with on New Year's Eve. Make sure that a responsible adult picks them up if they go out to a party to make sure they get home safely.

Many parents are using cell phone technology to have their children text them throughout the evening as to where they are and who they are with at the time. If a parent is doubtful about the truthfulness of their children's whereabouts, they can ask their teen to take a picture of their location with their phone.

