



Parents Are Heroes

Preventing Underage Use of Alcohol

TOGETHER! is grateful to Nancy Harper and ALERT Labs for sharing their information and expertise with Thurston County. *Parents Are Heroes* is part of the Kent County, Michigan, Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) Drug Free Communities Project.



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In this issue:

- **Correcting Misperceptions: Most teens do NOT drink; Most adults do NOT drink much.**
- **Alcohol irrevocably harms developing brains.**
- **Did You Know?**
- **What's Going On?**

Questions, Suggestions, Comments? click on

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For all previous issues of *Parents are Heroes*, click [HERE](#)

Quick Facts:

Dating violence, peer violence, bullying, and suicidal Behaviors are all linked to alcohol use. See [Pediatrics and PubMed](#).

Links to web sites about talking to children:

Children NOW

Time to Talk

Kid's Health: Kids and Alcohol

Parents: The AntiDrug

WA-RUaD: Start Talking Now

Habla Con Tus Hijos

What's Going On?....

TOGETHER! has a new website! Please get comfortable and surf through our pages here. We hope you find it user-friendly, helpful, and informative!

If you need help:

Crisis Clinic of Thurston-Mason County, **586-2800**

Teen Crisis Line, **586-2777**

Parent Resource Guide of Thurston County published by TOGETHER!

Click [here](#) for both the English and Spanish versions.



Banishing the MISperceptions...

Two major *misperceptions* make it difficult to prevent or reduce underage drinking: #1-Everybody drinks (a lot); #2-Drinking is harmless... But we can change that by sharing the truth.

Most teenagers do NOT drink. Parents who have been reading our newsletter or are familiar with the bi-annual Healthy Youth Surveys (HYS) KNOW that most teenagers do NOT drink. In fact, the 2008 HYS showed that **60%** of students in Grade 12, **69%** in Grade 10, **84%** in Grade 8 and **96%** of students in Grade 6 did NOT use alcohol in the past 30 days. But most parents and teens don't know that **not drinking is the norm. WE NEED TO TELL EVERYONE THE TRUTH.**

Most adults do NOT drink much or often.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) often collect information via behavioral surveys. One such survey, done in Washington state for 2008, reported that just over 41% of adults had not had a drink in the last 30 days. Furthermore, from 2001 to 2008, the numbers reporting having had at least one drink in the past 30 days have been dropping, from 62% in 2001 to 59% in 2008, indicating that more and more adults are opting out of drinking all together. ([CDC Prevalence and Trends](#)) **WE NEED TO TELL EVERYONE THE TRUTH.**

Do they reeeally drink that much???

Misperceptions about what is normal in terms of alcohol use are widespread. Parents and teenage students in general are wildly inaccurate in their estimates of each others' use of alcohol and other drugs.

Research reveals that parents consistently *underestimate* their own children's alcohol use, and *overestimate* drinking by children in general:

- In a 2008 study of parent perceptions around teenage drinking, conducted in Yakima and Seattle by the Washington Liquor Control Board (LCB), parents *perceive* that 40% of the peers of their own children, between the ages of 14 and 17, drink alcohol. In fact, according to the WA 2008 HYS, in **King County**, 89% of Grade 8, 71% of Grade 10, and 59% of Grade 12 students reported **no drinking** (average of 73%). In **Yakima County**, 79%

Stop the perception that drinking is a 'rite of passage'. It's a deadly trend!

We can be PROUD of our youth. Most kids want to do the right thing...

Drinking, smoking and eating habits of 15-year-olds around the world. Where do we fit in?

Listen to Dr. Laura Berman on Oprah! Radio. When should you begin talking to teens about partying?

Around the nation, some states are raising the allowable alcohol limit in beer. Thankfully, for now, WA is not among them. Find out who is [here](#)...

Marijuana and Rx drug use is rising. Is it a rebound effect or a signal of something else?

For more information on ALERT Labs Group (*Alcohol Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training*), please visit their website: www.alertlabs.org And visit TOGETHER! at www.thurstonttogether.org

of Grade 8, 66% of Grade 10, and 61% of Grade 12 students reported **no drinking** (average of 69%). Click [here](#) for the complete LCB 2007 teen survey, and [here](#) for the 2008 parent survey. In the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse's national 2009 attitudinal survey of parents and teens, 64% of parents believed it was **unrealistic** to expect that teens **will not** drink before they were 21. Prevention research tells us that parental attitudes have a powerful effect. "A child who gets through age 21 without smoking, using drugs or abusing alcohol is virtually certain never to do so. And, for better or worse, no one has greater power to influence a teen's decision whether to drink or use drugs than his parents." For the full survey, click [here](#).

Did You Know?

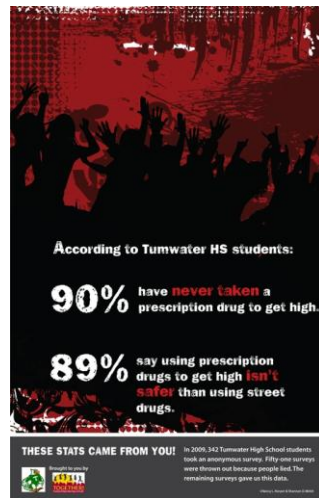
Alcohol causes irreparable damage to the young, developing brain. National research has shown that teenage drinkers suffer significant brain damage resulting in *legal, social and academic problems, and NEVER catch up with their peers who did not drink as teens*. See a report from the American Medical Association [here](#).

Referring back to the 2008 Healthy Youth Survey for Thurston County, 64% of students in Grade 12, 63% in Grade 10, and 65% of students in Grade 8 felt **daily consumption of alcohol was "possibly not risky"**. Brain research tells a very different story, in that even a small amount of alcohol can impair memory and learning. See the work of [Susan Tapert, Ph.D.](#) (a UW alum), a leading researcher in the field of alcohol and its effects on the developing brain.

Correcting the misperceptions.

In the 2007 LCB teen survey, students reported that peer pressure and wanting to fit in had the greatest influence on choosing whether to drink. Research has told us this for years.

That is why correct perceptions are important, with misperceptions leading to the belief that there is a lot of "peer pressure" to drink. We call it **Phantom Peer Pressure**. This perceived pressure leads young people to believe that they need to "drink up to the norm," though the true norm is not drinking (teens) or drinking moderately and only occasionally (adults). The science behind illuminating the truth about behavior is referred to as a Social



Norms approach. In 2009, in partnership with Tumwater High School, TOGETHER! began a social norms campaign to correct these misperceptions for adults and students alike. Now in it's fifth month, we will be excited to see numbers such as those cited in these posters climb closer and closer to 100%. Let's banish the phantoms! For more information on social norms, check out the [National Social Norms Institute](#).



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