



# 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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**Questions, Suggestions, Comments?** click on

[info@alertlabs.org](mailto:info@alertlabs.org) OR

[dhuning@thurstontogether.org](mailto:dhuning@thurstontogether.org)

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

### Quick Facts:

#### Relationships are everything!

- Sixty percent of Thurston Cty seniors reporting regular drinking also report being injured by a boyfriend or girlfriend (bruises, cuts, black eyes or broken bones).
- Forty-five percent of Thurston Cty seniors reporting regular drinking also report “not usually” eating dinner with their family.

### 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

### 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.



## Teens who drink alcohol also drive under the influence and/or ride with drivers under the influence

(All data reported comes from the 2008 Thurston County Healthy Youth Survey [HYS] unless otherwise specified.)

Parents who know that their teenage son or daughter drinks “sometimes” have been heard to say, “Well, I don’t like it that she drinks, but at least she knows better than to drive after drinking.”

Unfortunately, though teens “know” not to drink and drive, they apparently “forget” after they have had one or two drinks or are with a group. On the HYS, in response to the question “How many times in the last 30 days did you drive a car or other vehicle when you had been drinking alcohol ?” 12% of seniors reported doing so at least once. Twenty percent of seniors report riding with a driver who had been drinking, even if they had not.

We know that alcohol is often used in combination with other drugs and takes a huge toll on lives and health. Statewide, 25% of high school seniors report use of an illicit drug, compared to 27% in Thurston County. On a national scale, the Drug Abuse Warning Network reports 56,120 emergency department visits due to combined alcohol and other drug use in the 12- to 20-year-old age group (DAWN).

Automobile and motorcycle crashes are the leading cause of death in the 15- to 20- year-old age group. In 2008, nationally, 2,739 15- to 20-year-old drivers died in motor vehicle crashes, while an additional 228,000 were injured. Of the fatalities, 31% involved alcohol (Traffic Safety Facts, 2008).



**The crucial point is that only by reducing underage drinking and other drug use can we stop teens from combining alcohol and automobiles. If a teenager combines alcohol and other drugs, the chances are high that s/he will either drive or ride with a driver under the influence.**

## Teens who report alcohol and/or drug use have trouble getting help

The relationship to the questions “**During the last year, have you felt that you needed help (such as counseling or treatment) for your alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use?**” and “**Does your school provide a counselor, intervention specialist, or other school staff member for students to discuss problems with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs?**” are reported below.

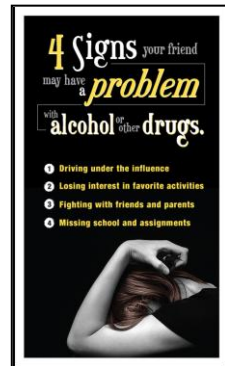
Those reporting may be unaware of services or simply not reaching out. This is an opportunity for schools to engage in cooperative efforts with students to better “market” services that *are* available. In both grades, nearly 50% of the students are not able to access the help they need, at least within their school.

	<u>Grade 10</u>	<u>Grade 12</u>
<b>Need help</b>	33	27
<b>No services or unaware of services</b>	16	10

### Did You Know?

Your teenager can conduct a self-test to determine if s/he needs help to stop using harmful substances, or legitimate substances harmfully, at [AlertLabs-SelfTest](#) or at [CheckYourself.com](#). For an interactive, adult-oriented self-test, click [here](#).

The urgent message for parents is this...if your child drinks—even occasionally, s/he needs your support in the form of a no-tolerance-for-underage-drinking message, and a referral to an intervention specialist or mental health counselor if necessary. To access resources, contact the school counselor. For community resources, contact the Crisis Clinic of Thurston-Mason County at 586-2800. The urgency of getting help escalates with a family history of drug dependency. The [April edition of \*Parents are Heroes\*](#) contained some valuable information on family



history.

For a more positive and engaging approach, instead of “telling” your kids not to drink before they are 21, try “asking” them to wait until they are 21 **and explain why**. We know that **the higher a student's perception of risk, the less the student engages in that behavior**. The science behind what alcohol does to a young brain, up to even the age of 25, is irrefutable. By explaining the science behind the “why”, the message is perceived not so much as an issue of control, but rather one of education.

There are terrific resources for you to explore *with* your kids at [NIDA for Teens](#), or [The Cool Spot](#) (for middle schoolers), For those adults more interested in the research, go to [A Research-based Guide on Prevention for Parents](#). To have a fascinating look at the developmental impacts of underage alcohol use, click [here](#). Written in an easy to understand manner, the research is far-reaching. For a look into cutting-edge research on brain science and substance abuse in youth, [this one-hour video](#) from the UW psychology department, featuring experts in this area of brain science, is well worth the time.

### The WA Liquor Control Board needs to hear from you!

The LCB is currently in the final stages of rewriting rules that directly affect youth exposure to alcohol advertising. Your input and voice are critical and the deadline is November 18<sup>th</sup>. Please read this [Action Alert](#) from the [Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention](#) and then [email the LCB](#) to let them know how important reducing youth exposure to alcohol advertising is to our community.

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### What's Going On?...

#### Dennis Embry is coming to town!

Dr. Embry is an expert on substance abuse and its effects on youth and families. Please consider joining us on Dec. 5 for an informative and empowering 6-hr workshop for professionals and families. **Registration is required!** For contact and registration information, go to the TOGETHER! website [here](#). (Your only cost is \$8 for lunch ☺.)

TOGETHER! has a Brand New Website! Please get comfortable and surf through our pages [here](#). We hope you find it user-friendly, helpful, and informative!

Empowering kids to abstain from alcohol has long-lasting effects. Health Behavior News Service.

They listen to you! If you want to have trust, fess up about your past drug use. New advice to parents.

MS What Up Wit Dat Teen Coalition rocks out with their 4<sup>th</sup> campaign, while TOGETHER! is about to launch our second. What campaign you say? Read on...

Drinking with friends may look glamorous on Sex in the City, but the reality is very different for young women.

Seattle neighborhood residents have had enough! No convenience at this convenience store...

A third of kids ages 12 to 17 had their first drink before they were 13. Students in middle school need support too, but it often goes unrecognized!

**For more information** on ALERT Labs Group (*Alcohol Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training*), please visit their website:

[www.alertlabs.org](http://www.alertlabs.org)

And visit TOGETHER! at

[www.thurstontgether.org](http://www.thurstontgether.org)