

A CLEAR VIEW...

*Promoting a safe and healthy community while working together as
Community Leaders Educating About Resistance to high risk behaviors.*

April, 2009

Morgan County CLEAR

P.O. Box 163, Versailles, MO 65084



Welcome to this issue of CLEAR View. This is our 8th edition of CLEAR View, which is a newsletter sharing information from CLEAR (Community Leaders Educating About Resistance) and our community grant for reducing risky drinking (binge and underage) in ages 12-25. In this issue of CLEAR View, we want to share information regarding risks of underage drinking as well as suggestions for talking about this important issue.

What Is Underage Drinking?

When anyone under age 21 drinks alcohol, we call it underage drinking. And underage drinking is against the law. Underage drinking is also dangerous and can harm the mind and body of a growing teen in ways many people don't realize.

Underage drinking is risky:

- ✓ **Is a major cause of death from injuries among young people.** Each year, people under 21 die as a result of underage drinking; this includes deaths from motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicide, and other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings.
- ✓ **Increases the risk of carrying out, or being a victim of, a physical or sexual assault.**
- ✓ **Can affect the body in many ways.** The effects of alcohol range from hangovers to death from alcohol poisoning.
- ✓ **Can lead to other problems.** These may include bad grades in school, run-ins with the law, and drug use.
- ✓ **Affects how well youth judge risk and makes sound decisions.** For example, after drinking, a teen may see nothing wrong with driving a car or riding with a driver who has been drinking.
- ✓ **Plays a role in risky sexual activity.** This can increase the chance of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
- ✓ **Can harm the growing brain especially when teens drink a lot.** Today we know that the brain continues to develop from birth through the teen years into the mid-20s.

Did You Know?

- The greatest influence on young people's decisions to begin drinking is the world they live in, which includes their families, friends, schools, the larger community, and society as a whole.
- Alcohol use by young people often is made possible by adults. After all, teens can't legally get alcohol on their own.

FACT: Most youth who start drinking before age 21 do so when they are 13-14 years old. That's why it's important to start talking early and keep talking about underage drinking. Send the message that underage drinking is NOT OK!

It's time to change how we all think, talk and act when it comes to underage drinking. We need to stop accepting it and start discouraging it. It's time to help youth understand that it is **NOT OK** to drink alcohol. Start long before youth start thinking about drinking.

Why is Underage Drinking A Problem?

So many young people drink. Many more young people use alcohol than tobacco or illegal drugs. By age 18, more than 70% of teens have had at least one drink.

When young people drink, they drink a lot at one time. Teens drink less often than adults. But when teens do drink, they drink more than adults. On average, young people have about 5 drinks on a single occasion. This is called binge drinking, a very dangerous way of drinking that can lead to serious problems and even death.

Early drinking can cause later alcohol problems. Of adults who started drinking before age 15, around 40% say they have the signs of alcohol dependence. That rate is four times higher than for adults who didn't drink until they were age 21.

Alcohol may have a special appeal for young people. The teen years are a time of adventure, challenges, and taking risks. Alcohol is often one of the risks young people take that can result in great harm.

FACT: Most 6 year olds know that alcohol is only for adults. Between ages 9 and 13, youth begin to think that alcohol use is ok. That's why it's never too early to start talking with your child about the risks of underage drinking. Teens say that parents are the #1 reason they don't choose alcohol.

FACT: Rates of death and injury nearly triple between the early teen and early adult years. Dangerous activities like underage drinking play a large role. That's why ending underage drinking can help save lives.

Ending Underage Drinking is Everyone's Job

There is a role for everyone.

- Everyone can work together to create a community where young people can grow up and feel good about themselves without drinking.
- Everyone in the community should deliver the message that underage drinking is not okay. The message should be the same whether youth hear it in school, at home, in places of worship, on the sports field, in youth programs, or in other places where young people gather.
- It is important for families to pay attention to what's happening with their teens.
- Young people can learn about the dangers of alcohol use. They can change how they and others think about drinking.

Calendar

RBS (Responsible Beverage Service)

Training dates:

4:00 p.m. Fri., April 24, 2009

Coconuts, 15208 Red Hollow RD

Gravois Mills **RSVP 573-789-5509**

RBS Training

CLEAR is proud to announce that ATC agent, Keith Hendrickson will be the trainer for RBS to be held at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, April 24, 2009. The training will be at Coconuts At the Lake (15208 Red Hollow RD). The advantage of having Agent Hendrickson is huge. He will be able to provide fake ID's that look authentic and walk through identifying the differences in fakes and real ones. Please RSVP so that materials are available.

Coalition meeting date:

12:00 p.m. Wed., May 6, 2009 Morgan County Health Center, 104 W Lafayette, Versailles

Want to know more? Need additional information about CLEAR or RBS? Want to participate?

Contact CLEAR at 573-789-5509

www.morgancountyclear.org

Check out our website:

Q & A with Community Heroes, Jason Generally & Sue Witte

Thank you, Jason and Sue, for sharing your expertise!

(A community hero is someone who sets a good example for the youth of Morgan County by doing his/her job well. There is a hero from the communities of Stover and Versailles. Morgan County RII High School Boys Basketball Coach Jason Generally has been selected as one community hero. He recently administered the first year of Tiger Club Basketball League in Versailles. Approximately 200 kindergarten through sixth graders attended. The other hero is Morgan County RI Family and Consumer Science teacher and FCCLA advisor Sue Witte. She is a teacher who always has time to assist and “talk” with her students. 113 Morgan County RI high school students belong to FCCLA.)

CLEAR Q: What is your vision of the future for the youth of Morgan County?

Coach Jason Generally: Our youth are growing up in a world of ever-changing and improving technologies. Due to the wide access of these technologies, our youth are growing up in a world that is becoming smaller and smaller. Our children are no longer simply a part of the local community, but are active members of a global community. As a result, the ways in which we educate our youth and communicate with them must be redirected as well. This is the challenge of teachers and parents alike. We must stimulate responsible growth in our youth, using technologies and tools never previously considered, in order to promote intelligent responses.

FCCLA Sponsor Sue Witte: My vision for “my kids” is that they accomplish all they are capable of and not just do enough to get by. I hear all the time that something they have done is good enough. My response to them is that “Good enough is not good enough; only your best is good enough”. I try my hardest to give my students my best and I expect their best in return. Life is short and you only get one go around, make it count for all you can. There is nothing that they can’t do if they are willing to work hard for it.

CLEAR Q: What advice do you have for youth in celebrating prom and graduation?

Coach Jason Generally: Prom and graduation are both wonderful celebrations. I would advise all of our students to enjoy themselves in a safe environment. I would urge our students to engage in Prom activities that facilitate opportunities for enjoyment and happy reflections, rather than anguish in the injury or loss of a friend due to irresponsible behaviors.

Graduation celebrates a milestone, as well as a new chapter in the life of a graduating student. I strongly recommend that all students participate in “Project Graduation” activities, which provide our students the chance to celebrate in a drug and alcohol free environment. Graduation is about joyful reflection and the hopeful outlook of endless possibilities. It’s a “life” celebration... with the key word being “life”. These fantastic moments may be ruined in the blink of an eye if the proper perspective of a “life” celebration is lost.

FCCLA Sponsor Sue Witte: These are two incredible events; savor and enjoy every minute of them. But do it safely and make good choices. As part of FCCLA, we have worked to promote safe driving. Knowing the right thing to do and doing it are not always the same thing, when you get behind the wheel there are choices to make. Choose to wear your seatbelt even if it wrinkles your dress; choose to pay attention to the road even if you’re getting a text from the hottest person in your class; choose to drive the speed limit even if it means you might get there late. Every time I hear sirens, as a teacher I’m afraid it is one of my students. It’s a parent’s nightmare but also a teacher’s. I used to go home from Prom and worry about if all the kids would make it home safe and sound, but now I go to sleep knowing they are all safely celebrating together at Project Prom which our parents work so hard to provide. I would like to challenge all students to celebrate graduation safely as well. Enjoy your family and friends but do it without drinking. It can be done. And as many of my students have heard me say, “The last time I checked the legal drinking age in the state of Missouri is 21, and they aren’t 21”. When you drink the first thing that goes out the window is your good judgment. We need you to have good judgment; we need you to make good choices. Your life matters.

Other community alcohol awareness activities:

The following activities sponsored by SADD, Stover Police Department, FCCLA, and CLEAR will include:

1. Seatbelt convincer simulator
2. Sobriety tests
3. Rollover simulator demonstration
4. Drunk goggles with remote control cars
5. Drunk goggles with golf carts

These activities will be presented at each of these events:

Morgan County RII Pre Prom Activities April 13-17, MCR2 High School

Stover Safety Day, Morgan County RI Activities 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Saturday, May 2; Stover Community Center

According to SADD sponsors Diana Andreas and Ginger Hinck, students will participate in these activities to reduce underage drinking which is often a way to celebrate Prom. Students will also be signing agreements to remain alcohol free.

FCCLA sponsor, Sue Witte, and committee chairperson, Desiray Belt, are encouraging parents, students and the community to attend. Many activities will be specifically for middle school students.

Morgan County Health Center Kids Safety Day 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Saturday, April 25; Versailles City Park

Morgan County RI Project Prom Friday, May 8th

Morgan County RII Project Graduation Saturday, May 16th

What Families Can Do About Underage Alcohol Use

While many teens drink alcohol, underage alcohol use is not inevitable. Families are not helpless to prevent it. Focus your efforts on the factors that protect teens from alcohol use. At the same time, you can work to reduce the factors that increase the chance that they will drink.

Support your teens and give them space to grow.

- Be involved in your teens' lives. Be loving and caring.
- Encourage your teens' growing independence, but set appropriate limits.
- Make it easy for your teens to share information about their lives.
- Know where your teens are, what they're doing, who they're with, and who their friends are.
- Find ways for your teens to be involved in family life, such as doing chores or caring for a younger brother or sister.
- Set clear rules, including rules about alcohol use. Enforce the rules you set.

Talk with your teens about alcohol use.

- When you talk with your teens about drinking, listen to them and respect what they say.
- Make clear your expectation that your teens will not drink.
- Teach your children about the dangers of underage drinking.
- Discuss laws about underage drinking, including the age 21 law.

Help your teens make good decisions about alcohol.

- Help your teens know how to resist alcohol and avoid riding with someone who has been drinking.
- Help them find ways to have fun without alcohol.
- Do not give alcohol to your teens. Tell them that any alcohol in your home is off limits to them and to their friends.
- Don't let your teens attend parties where alcohol is served. Make sure alcohol isn't available at teen parties in your own home.

Be aware of factors that may increase the risk of teen alcohol use.

- Significant social transitions such as graduating to middle or high school, or getting a driver's license
- A history of conduct problems
- Depression and other serious emotional problems
- A family history of alcoholism
- Contact with peers involved in risky drinking.

Be a positive adult role model.

- If you drink yourself, drink responsibly. That means not drinking too much or too often.
- Stay away from alcohol in high-risk situations. For example, don't drive or go boating when you've been drinking.
- Get help if you think you have an alcohol-related problem.

Work with others.

No matter how close you and your teens are, it may not be enough to prevent them from drinking. It's hard for families to do this alone. It's important to reach out to schools, communities, and government. Become aware of all initiatives to support your efforts.

Citation: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action for Families*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2007. Information compiled can be found in its total text at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking>