

Alert

Metropolitan Drug Commission

A PUBLICATION OF NEWS AND EVENTS

MDC joins Knox County Schools to raise awareness of prescription drug epidemic for annual Red Ribbon Week

This year marks the 22nd observance of Red Ribbon Week, a campaign to promote healthy, drug-free lifestyles. The Metropolitan Drug Commission has joined forces with Knox County Middle School health teachers to provide students a three day curriculum called "Red Flags," a program about the harms of prescription drug abuse and warnings of suicide.

Since 2002, the Metropolitan Drug Commission has been taking a popular original drama to Knox County middle schools during Red Ribbon Week. "Research now shows that one-day assembly programs can raise awareness, but do little to impact youth attitudes and behaviors," said Catherine Thatcher Brunson, executive director of the Metropolitan Drug Commission. "This year's drama program has been redesigned into a three-day curriculum allowing teachers the opportunity to administer the program to students in a small classroom environment where students often feel safer to ask questions."

The curriculum provides opportunities for increased reinforcement of key learning objectives related to the dangers of prescription drug use; practicing refusal skills; and important information about what to do if you or a loved one is depressed and contemplating suicide. The curriculum was presented to the health teachers in the form of a tool-kit that can be utilized as often as every nine weeks if the teacher so desires.

Nationwide, this celebration has become a major force for raising public awareness and mobilizing communities to combat alcohol and drug use among youth.



The three-day kit includes an original drama on DVD and a follow-up DVD program that facilitates the classroom curriculum with interactive learning materials. Health teachers were also provided background information on prescription drugs and suicide to be fully prepared to administer the program. Additionally, the students were provided a wallet-sized "HELP" card with emergency contact numbers should they need to access services.

The first Red Ribbon Celebration was organized in 1986 by a grassroots organization of parents concerned about the destruction caused by alcohol and other drug abuse. The red ribbon was adopted in honor of DEA agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, kidnapped and killed while investigating drug traffickers. The campaign has reached millions of children and has been recognized by the U.S. Congress.

"A large number of the emergencies we respond to are drug and alcohol related, so Rural Metro felt this was an important opportunity to reach Knox County youth and reduce the number of calls we receive in the future," said Tre Hargett, Vice President of Rural Metro and sponsor of Powell Middle School. "Research shows that children are less likely to use alcohol and other drugs when parents and other role models are clear and consistent with no use messages about substance use and abuse. Rural Metro is proud to be a part of bringing this valuable program to Knox County's youth."

Thanks to the following sponsors, the "Red Flags" tool-kit was provided to every Knox County Middle School for free of charge—**Knox County Sheriff's Office, Knoxville Police Department, Rural/Metro Corporation, Knox County Health Department, Knox County District Attorney General's Office** and the **East Tennessee Foundation**.



Members of the **Fulton High School PRIDE Team** appeared as extras in the "Red Flags" film during the classroom scenes. Thanks to **FHS Principal Kitty Hatcher** for allowing the Metropolitan Drug Commission to film at the high school!

Special thanks to the following "Red Flags" sponsors

Report: Schools can't, shouldn't shoulder prevention burden

Most American kids receive some drug education in the classroom, but a new report contends that schools should not be relied upon to prevent early use of alcohol and other drugs and its consequences.

The report, "Preventing Education in America's Schools: Findings and Recommendations from a Survey of Educators," noted that 37 states require schools to teach students about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs. However, "Teachers don't have the time, training or other resources needed to do the job effectively, regardless of what the state-mandated standards say," according to the report by *Join Together* and *Communitas Online*.

For example, the report noted that 26 percent of educators who actively teach prevention in the classroom said they have had no training to do so.

David Rosenbloom, director of Join Together, said that schools have become the primary source of prevention education "by default," and should not be faulted for their inability to deliver services effectively. "Schools are only one part of the community solution," he said. "This report points out the need for each community to develop an effective prevention strategy and not just assume the schools will take care of things."

Nor should the report be taken as an attempt by schools to simply "punt" a difficult issue, he added. "We found that teachers were willing to be involved, but they're telling us they simply don't have the time to do it," said Rosenbloom.

Mathea Falco, president of Drug Strategies — which produced the seminal "Making the Grade" reports on effective school-based prevention — said she still believes there is a role for prevention in the schools. "It's the one place you have a captive audience outside of prison," she noted. "We can't abandon the goal of having effective prevention programs in our schools."

However, she added, "I think that, pragmatically, the pressures schools are now under to meet the academic testing standards under No Child Left Behind essentially leave them without any extra time that might be devoted to prevention." Combined with a 21-percent cut in federal prevention funding since 2002, testing mandates leaves school-based prevention "off the radar screen," said Falco.

The report authors recommended that: Schools should not be the principal provider of general prevention education. However, "they can and should play a role as part of a comprehensive community prevention strategy including parents and other social institutions."

School systems should carefully reevaluate money and time spent on outside programs and speakers and unfocused printed

materials, because they are likely to have no lasting impact on what students know about alcohol and other drugs or on their drinking or drug-taking behavior." Both teachers and past research have found these types of interventions to be ineffective, the report noted.

Schools should adopt proven, research-based prevention programs and curricula for use in after-school and extracurricular activities.

Teachers should be given easier access to proven prevention materials that can be used within the actual time constraints in schools.

Teachers and administrators with alcohol and other drug prevention as part of their job responsibilities should be held accountable in formal evaluations.

The survey found that only about a quarter of the educators surveyed said their schools had one or more courses devoted to alcohol and other drug prevention. The subject was most likely (42 percent) to be covered as part of other courses, such as health.

But 32 percent of respondents said that prevention is taught inconsistently or not at all, and more than three-quarters of educators said they spend less than 10 hours annually on the subject of alcohol and other drug prevention. "You need to spend at least 10 hours on prevention to be effective; otherwise, it's just a complete waste of time," said Falco.

When prevention is taught, 77 percent of educators said the information is delivered via teacher lectures and demonstrations, although 53 percent also reported using outside experts, and 32 percent used D.A.R.E. In elementary schools, however, D.A.R.E. officers were the most likely to deliver prevention education, followed by guidance counselors (38 percent), outside speakers (31 percent), physical-education teachers (26 percent), and health-education specialists (25 percent).

"Schools continue to use D.A.R.E. when the program has been proven repeatedly and at huge public expense to be ineffective," said Falco.

At the middle-school level, health teachers most commonly taught prevention, followed by guidance counselors. High-school students were most likely to learn about alcohol and other drugs from health specialists.

Only 39 percent of educators surveyed rated their prevention programs "very effective" or "somewhat effective," while 32 percent called their programs "not very effective" or "not at all effective" (29 percent said they didn't know how effective their programs are). The report, funded by the Gift of the Magi Foundation, was based on online surveys of more than 3,500 teachers, school administrators, and other educators from across the U.S.

MDC launches another PRIDE Team at Powell High School

Youth as resources. That's the underlying approach to this successful drug prevention program for high school students. PRIDE Team members reach out to their peers and community with an assertive drug-free message. Through example and leadership they help others to be drug-free. PRIDE Teams concentrate their efforts on community service and drug education. The students believe in a clear, no-use message, an overall healthy lifestyle and positive peer interaction.

The Powell PRIDE Team meets every Tuesday after school and is already hard at work raising money to attend the 31st World Drug Prevention Conference in Cincinnati, OH next April. This conference is critical to the team's future success and will train them to lead peer to peer prevention efforts within their school and community.

If you would like to help them achieve their dream of attending the conference, contact the Metropolitan Drug Commission at 588-5550.



2007-2008 Powell PRIDE Team Officers (L to R): Chair, Devin Harvey; Vice-Chair, Heather Carter; Secretary, Emileigh Harman; and Treasurer, Misty Turner.

Substance abuse, addiction among most serious workplace issues

A national survey of human resources professionals conducted by the nonprofit Hazelden Foundation shows that while substance abuse and addiction are recognized as among the most serious problems faced in the workplace, employer policies and practices are not fully addressing the problem. The survey also found that although most companies offer employee assistance programs, many do not openly and proactively deal with employee substance abuse issues, do not refer employees to treatment programs and face barriers that prevent them from helping employees seek and receive addiction treatment.

The survey of more than 1,000 senior human resource professionals provides an in-depth look at HR professionals' knowledge of substance abuse and addiction in the workplace and the roles they play in helping both employers and employees identify and address this serious public health issue.

Acknowledging the problem, but what to do about it? According to the survey, **more than two-thirds (67 percent) of HR professionals today believe that substance abuse and addiction is one of the most serious issues they face in their company.** Absenteeism, reduced productivity and a lack of trust are major problems stemming from substance abuse that affect the efficiency and success of companies across the country. Despite the serious nature of the issue and the wide adoption of policies and programs, many HR professionals are not referring employees to treatment programs. Less than one-quarter (22 percent) of HR professionals say their companies openly and proactively deal with employee substance abuse and addiction issues.

Importance of Education

The survey showed that a series of key barriers and personal limitations prevent HR professionals from helping employees seek and receive addiction treatment.

— More than half (54 percent) of HR professionals surveyed believe that getting employees to acknowledge or talk about the issue is their toughest challenge.

— Nearly half (49 percent) of HR professionals cited at least one of four personal hurdles to helping their employees with substance abuse and addiction issues: lack of experience in identifying substance abuse and addiction (20 percent); lack of information regarding treatment options (16 percent); personal discomfort in approaching employees about the issue (13 percent); and not having enough time to deal with substance abuse and addiction issues (13 percent).

In an effort to help deal with those barriers, HR professionals want help addressing substance abuse and addiction in the workplace.

— Eighty-five percent of HR professionals believe that offering education programs to build understanding of addressing addiction in the workplace would be an effective component of a solution to this problem.

— HR professionals said they would benefit most from information on how to identify substance abuse and addiction in the workplace (32 percent); discuss the issues with their employees (25 percent); and choose the most effective treatment options for their employees (19 percent).

Challenging the Business

According to HR professionals surveyed, employee substance abuse and addiction can have a negative effect on business.

— HR professionals reported that the most significant problems their companies experience due to employee substance abuse and addiction were absenteeism (62 percent); reduced productivity (49 percent); lack of trustworthiness (39 percent); negative impact on the company's external reputation (32 percent); missed deadlines (31 percent); increased health care costs (29 percent); and unpredictable, defensive interpersonal relations (29 percent).

Effective treatment programs for employee substance abuse and addiction are invaluable to a business' long-term success

— An overwhelming majority of HR professionals (92 percent) agree that an effective treatment program increases employee productivity.

— Two-thirds (67 percent) of HR professionals believe that access to an effective treatment program reduces overall health care costs for employers.

Trouble with Testing

The national survey showed traditional systems for recognizing substance abuse and addiction may not work as well as HR professionals believe.

— Eighty-five percent of HR professionals report that they believe drug testing is an effective way to diagnose workplace substance abuse and addiction. However, research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Addiction shows that 69 percent of substance abusers or addicts in 2005 used alcohol, which can go undetected through drug testing alone.

Stigma of Addiction

Addiction issues may make new hires less attractive but do not deter commitment to current employees, according to the survey.

— HR professionals are divided on whether or not their company would be less interested in hiring a recovering addict. Forty-three percent agree that their company would be less likely to hire a recovering addict, and 47 percent disagree.

According to the survey, HR professionals see a growing issue for women with regard to substance abuse and addiction.

— More than half (56 percent) of HR professionals surveyed say they believe addiction among women has increased over the last five years.

— HR professionals believe the major barriers preventing women from getting treatment are fear of losing custody of their children (75 percent); reluctance to admit their addiction (69 percent); and fear that their employers (62 percent) and their families (58 percent) will find out.

For more information on substance abuse in the workplace or to find drug-free workplace training for employers and employees, call the Metropolitan Drug Commission at (865) 588-5550 or visit www.metrodrug.org.

MDC Epidemiologist meets U.S. Surgeon Gen. Moritsugu



Stephanie Armbrister recently attended the National Prevention Network Conference in Portland, OR and had the privilege to meet **United States Surgeon General Kenneth P. Moritsugu**. Gen. Moritsugu was the featured speaker for the opening session. In 2006, Gen. Moritsugu issued the *Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*. "Alcohol remains the most heavily abused substance by America's youth," said Dr. Moritsugu. "This Call to Action is attempting to change the culture and attitudes toward drinking in America. We can no longer ignore what alcohol is doing to our children." Copies of the Call to Action can be obtained at www.surgeongeneral.gov.

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Visit our website for information about starting or maintaining a Drug-free Workplace Program, parent resources, treatment options, general drug descriptions, including warning signs and effects, and local and national research about drug use.

www.metrodrug.org

This project is funded under an agreement with TCCY



Art Therapy Day at Richard Yoakley School

MDC volunteers recently sponsored an art therapy day at Richard Yoakley School to reward students who have achieved exemplary behavior. This incentive will occur the last Friday of every month to encourage good behavior and promote conversations with professionals to assist with identifying individual or family issues needing greater attention. The first project (shown below)



was to create mosaic tiles. Most of the students gave their beautiful creations to their moms or grandmothers.

Jean Drive to benefit Richard Yoakley School

Middle and high school students at Richard Yoakley (RYS) are in need of new or gently used blue jeans. Jeans can be dropped off at the Metropolitan Drug Commission (5908 Lyons View Pike, Cedar Cottage in Lakeshore Park). Questions? Call (865) 588-5550.

Recovery Prayer Breakfast urges community to support local treatment efforts

The MDC along with General Randy Nichols recently hosted a Recovery Prayer Breakfast. The event was held to underscore the value of investing in treatment, which can not only help people regain their lives, but also help the community prosper. Discussions on the importance of faith in recovery, challenges of serving the indigent, and trends in treatment and the legal system were the main focus. Thanks to all the volunteers who made this possible!



MDC in Action

From Sept 1 to Oct 31, the MDC serviced the community by providing:

71 Treatment Referrals
1,889 Prevention Materials & Resources
311,961 Website Hits

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To submit an announcement or article to the Metropolitan Drug Commission's **ALERT**, please call (865) 588-5550.



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