

Alert

Metropolitan Drug Commission

Strengthens Families. Protects Lives.

Study Cites Trend in Teenage Abuse of Over-the-Counter Medicines to Get High

A “dose of prevention” is the goal of a national cough medicine abuse education initiative sponsored by the Community Anti- Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) and the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA). It seems that just behind marijuana, inhalants and prescription drug usage, over-the-counter cough medicine (OTC) is the drug of choice for teens in grades 7 through 12.

According to the Center for Substance Abuse Research at the University of Maryland, an estimated 10% of teens (around 2.5 million) have abused over-the-counter cough medicines to get high—about the same percentage that have used crack/cocaine or ecstasy. Since marijuana and prescription drug abuse rates in Knox County mirror those reported in this study, it is projected that OTC abuse rates would also be around 1 in 10 locally.

Dextromethorphan (often abbreviated as DXM) is the active ingredient found in many OTC medicines from syrups and tablets to gel caps. Taken in high doses, OTC medicines produce a “high” that comes with equally high risks including heart problems, vomiting, seizures and loss of consciousness. Teenagers abusing these typically safe medications are taking them at sometimes 25 to 50 times the recommended dosage to intentionally produce “out-of-body” sensations, mild distortions of color and sound as well as loss of motor control.

While parents may be aware of the dangers of illicit drugs, they often overlook OTC drugs as a potential hazard, according to a 2006 CADCA survey. Its findings showed only eight percent of parents were aware that young people are abusing cough remedies, and 75 percent don’t talk with their children about it. That hasn’t stopped kids from talking about it, though, with each other, at school and on the Internet, which is where much of the information can be found.

Information on these sites includes recommendations on how much to take, how to extract DXM from cough medicines and other drugs with which to combine it. Slang terms for DXM vary, but parents should be aware of some of the more common terms, which include: Dex, DXM, Robo, Skittles, Syrup, Triple-C and Tussin. Terms for using the drug include: Robo-ing, Robo-tripping and Skittling, among others.

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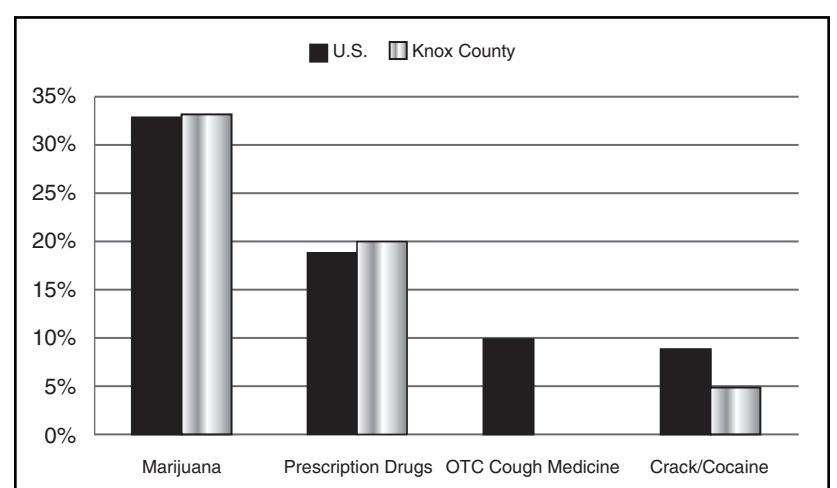
Parents should also watch for red flags of the signs of abuse, like a child hiding medicine bottles in his/her bedroom or backpack or disposing of empty bottles and pill packs in the trash; exhibiting odd behaviors; losing interest in friends and activities or experiencing hallucinations.

Additionally, parents can take other preventative measures both at home and in the community to safe-guard against possible OTC abuse by educating themselves on the subject and sharing the information with school officials, coaches, counselors and others in contact with their teens. Parents should also communicate that they do not want their children taking medicine without their knowledge and also teach them to respect medicines by using them according to the directions. Finally, parents are encouraged to pay attention to the types and quantities of medications kept in the home and keep them out of easily accessible areas, like medicine cabinets.

Crucial to combating this substance abuse problem is community involvement and raising awareness among parents, educators, healthcare professionals, law enforcement and others who influence teens. “As a community, we want to safeguard our young people against substance abuse,” said General Arthur Dean, Executive Director and CEO of CADCA. “While children make up only 25 percent of our national population, they represent 100 percent of our future.”

“Retailers play a critical role in combating OTC abuse,” explained Metropolitan Drug Commission Executive Director Catherine Brunson. “We encourage merchants to be vigilant in monitoring their supplies for theft or large quantity sales, particularly by minors.”

For more information about cough medicine abuse and prevention, visit our webpage at www.metrodrug.org.



Most Sexual Assaults Drug-facilitated

A recent study conducted at the University of Illinois at Chicago, funded by the National Institute of Justice, finds most sexual assaults are drug-facilitated. According to Adam Negrusz, associate professor of forensic sciences in the UIC College of Pharmacy and lead author of the study, an estimated 100,000 sexual assaults are reported in the United States each year—a number which could actually be three times higher if all cases were reported.

“In some cases the substances are taken voluntarily by the victims, impairing their ability to make decisions,” Negrusz said. “In other cases the substances are given to the victims without their knowledge, which may decrease their ability to identify a dangerous situation or to resist the perpetrator.” Individuals who use drugs, with or without alcohol, put themselves at a significantly higher risk for sexual assault.

According to survey results, 62% of the subjects were found to have at least one of the 45 analyzed drugs in their system; 5% tested positive for the classic date-rape drugs; and, 4% of the subjects had been drugged without their knowledge. Of victims who voluntarily took drugs, 35% were likely to have been impaired at the time of the sexual assault. According to Negrusz, the study “demonstrated that sexual assault complainants severely underreport their illegal drug usage,” and drug-facilitated sexual assault is more often due to the subject’s own drug use,

rather than surreptitious drugging by the perpetrator. Underreporting presents an obstacle in punishing perpetrators. According to the **6th District Attorney General, Randall E. Nichols**, “it is very important for a prosecutor to know if drug use is involved in a sex crime. It is also important to know what drugs were being used and if the user was the criminal or the victim. The Uniform Accident and Sickness Policy Provision Law (UPPL) deters emergency rooms from collecting information on drug use and that inhibits our ability to successfully prosecute these cases.” (UPPL: “The insurer shall not be liable for any loss sustained or contracted in consequence of the insured’s being intoxicated or under the influence of any narcotic unless administered on the advice of a physician.”)

Another recent study examined risk factors for potential sexual assault victims and biological effects of alcohol and drugs. In an article published in March in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, Dr. Janice DuMont explains that *almost 90% of sexual assault victims had consumed alcohol immediately before the assault*. DuMont further explained that substances like prescription or over-the-counter drugs and street drugs have pharmacologic properties that can alter states of consciousness and lower inhibitions, especially when used simultaneously with alcohol.

(More information on this study is available through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at www.ncjrs.gov).

SPHERE Awards Put Unsung Heroes in the Spotlight

We are pleased to announce the winners of the first-ever Knoxville SPHERE Awards! Nearly 200 people came out to the Knoxville Convention Center on Friday, February 27, to honor **Special People Helping Everyone Reach Excellence**. At the event Knoxville’s unsung heroes were recognized for their outstanding leadership, diversity appreciation and community service efforts.

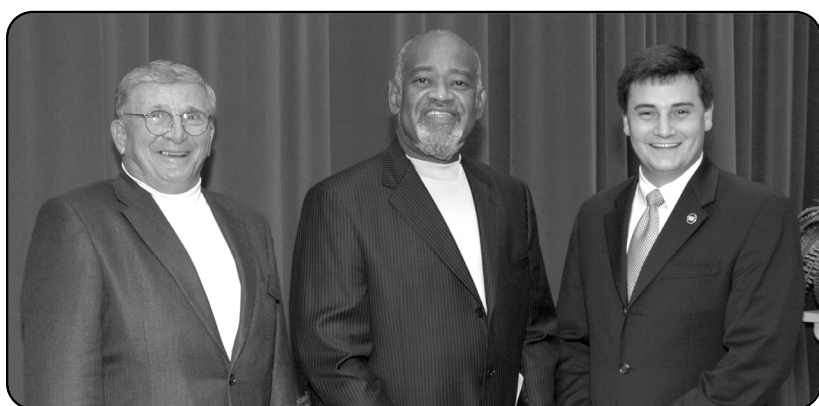
The award recipients listed below were among more than 50 individuals and groups nominated by students, teachers and others for their efforts to improve our community. Congratulations to the 2009 SPHERE Award winners:

- Bearden High School Student Government Association
- Pastor Christopher R. Battle, Tabernacle Baptist Church
- Mr. Randy Boyd, Radio Fence Company
- Ms. Leonia Johnson, DHS Social Worker
- Ms. Jeana Kirby, Teacher at Halls High School
- The Knoxville Zoo Youth “Vol” Program
- Ms. Byrgundy Mallory, Student at Gibbs High School
- Mr. Steven Miller, Student at Powell High School
- Ms. Melanie Rankin, Student at Christian Academy of Knoxville

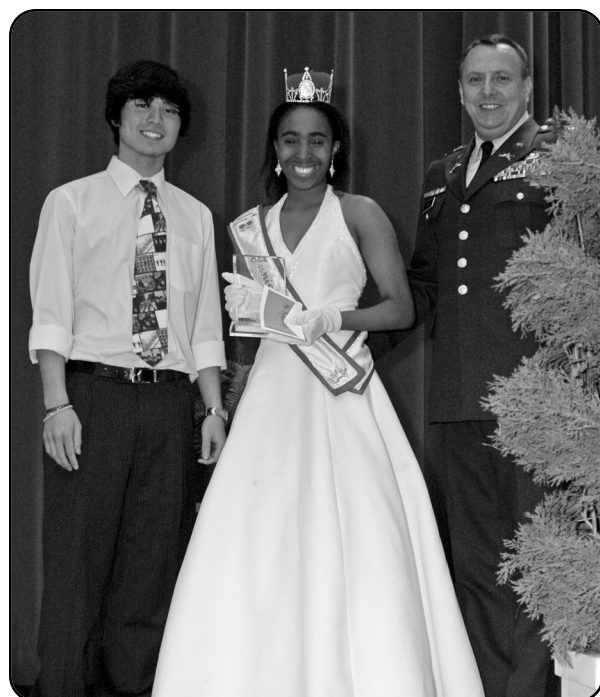
The SPHERE Awards were hosted by the Metropolitan Drug Commission and the Knoxville/Knox County Mayors’ Youth Action Council. HOT 104.5, the Tennessee National Guard Counter Drug Task Force and WBIR-TV sponsored the show.



Powell High School Senior and Sphere Committee Chair Devin Harvey addressed attendees of the 2009 Sphere Awards. (Photo credit: Marlene & Company)



Knox County Commissioners Mike Brown and Tank Strickland along with Tennessee State Representative Ryan Haynes attended the 2009 SPHERE Awards to show support in honoring outstanding teens in Knoxville. (Photo credit: Marlene & Company)

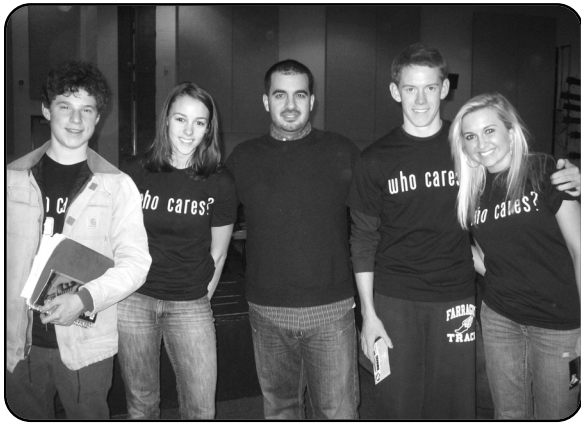


South Doyle High School Student Truman Melton (left) and **Lt. Colonel Byron Deal** (far right) presented **Gibbs High Student Byrgundy Mallory** (center) with the Teen Trailblazer Award, which recognizes youth leadership and is sponsored by the Tennessee National Guard Counter Drug Task Force. (photo credit: Marlene & Company)

Knoxville Youth Summit—Huge Success

With more than 300 teens and volunteers from Knox and surrounding counties coming together at Bearden High School on January 31, the 2009 Knoxville Youth Summit celebrated its most successful year yet!

Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale opened the event by encouraging students to get involved in their schools and community. Then a panel of local professional and student leaders including Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jim McIntyre and Knoxville Chamber Partnership CEO Mike Edwards interacted with participants to discuss the importance of school involvement. “With this year’s summit we wanted to give students a voice and demonstrate that there are a lot of us who want to make a positive difference in school and the community,” said Carrie Cox, Chair of the Youth Action Council.

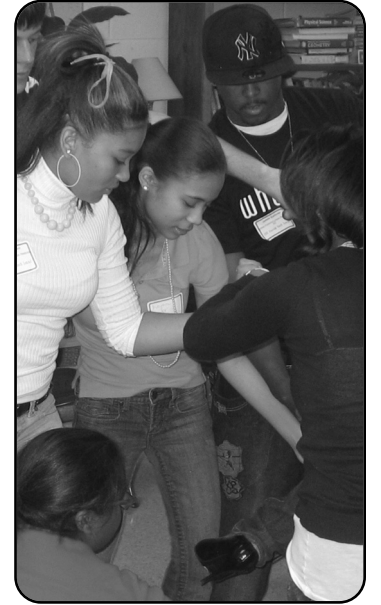


Will Kronick and Carrie Cox from West High School along with Max Waibel of Farragut and Michaelan Moore of Webb High School stand with Javier Sanchez (center), the keynote speaker at the 2009 Knoxville Youth Summit on Saturday, January 31 at Bearden High School. Sanchez challenged students to make positive choices and believe in the

difference they can make in their community. The Knoxville Youth Summit, hosted by the Metropolitan Drug Commission and the Knoxville/Knox County Mayors’ Youth Action Council, was designed to empower students “who care” about their schools and community to get involved and make a difference.

The theme, “Who Cares,” was chosen to get students to think about the things that matter most to them. Participants were broken into groups that worked to identify problems and create plans to get more people involved with issues like childhood obesity and college readiness. According to the feedback received on event evaluations, students left feeling inspired. Ninety-five percent indicated that the Youth Summit taught them how they can make a positive difference in the community, and 97 percent said the event helped them come up with a plan that they can use in their organization or school.

Sponsors for 2009 include the Knox County Council PTA and the Knoxville Area Chamber Partnership. The Knoxville Youth Summit is presented annually by the Metropolitan Drug Commission and the Knoxville/Knox County Mayors’ Youth Action Council.



Vanesha Gunn (Bearden High School), Keyara Taylor (Hardin Valley Academy) and James Gallman (Fulton High School) work to untie a “human knot” in a workshop on college readiness and eligibility at the 2009 Knoxville Youth Summit. Students participated in team building activities and discussions about topics that students care about like the environment, volunteerism and preparation for college.

Local Officials’ Plea: Parents, Don’t Be A Party To Teenage Drinking

During prom and graduation season teens are not the only ones feeling pressured when it comes to decisions on alcohol use. Parents, thinking it is inevitable that teens will drink during these “rights of passage,” often feel pressure from their *teenagers*. By providing what they believe is a “safe party place” either at home or at a hotel or rental property, parents are trying to protect their teens from drinking elsewhere or being involved in an accident.

District Attorney General Randy Nichols, Knoxville Police Chief Sterling Owen, IV and Knox County Sheriff Jimmy “J.J.” Jones are partnering with the Metropolitan Drug Commission through the local media to reach parents with this simple message: You cannot make it safe or legal for anyone under age 21 to drink alcohol. The fact is that parents who host a teen drinking party have the most to lose. If you allow teen drinking in your home or a place you have made available to them, you can be prosecuted. Additionally, parents who allow teens to drink in their homes may be held liable for thousands of dollars in legal damages if the teen later drives while intoxicated, either injuring or killing themselves or others.

The Metropolitan Drug Commission wants to help parents make this prom and graduation season safe for everybody by offering these tips for teen parties.

A parent should be at home during the entire party.

- Parents can bring in snacks, sodas, etc. Your presence will keep the party running smoothly and enable you to meet your teen’s friends.
- Carefully decide what part of the house will be used for the party. If the party is in the main part of the house, your presence will seem more natural, and you will be able to supervise the activities more easily.
- You may choose to have another adult present to help chaperone the party.

Alcohol or other drugs should not be served or allowed.

- You may be liable for monetary damages in a civil lawsuit or face criminal charges if you furnish alcohol or drugs to minors.
- Be alert to signs of drug and alcohol use.
- Guests who attempt to bring drugs or alcohol should be promptly asked to leave.
- If anyone arrives under the influence of drugs or alcohol, call their parents to ensure safe transportation home. (Do not allow anyone to drive under the influence.)

Metropolitan Drug Commission Welcomes New Project Director



Catherine Watrous Burkhart joined the Metropolitan Drug Commission staff in March.

Catherine Watrous Burkhart, a 10-year veteran of the local media, has joined the Metropolitan Drug Commission as the new project director. She will serve as the media liaison and special events coordinator for the organization.

Her past experience includes working in radio as a promotions director and news-talk producer at Citadel Broadcasting of Knoxville for over a decade. Prior to that, she anchored and reported radio news at WMTN in Morristown. She has worked as an intern with WATE-TV and WKXT (now WVLT) and also has served on various marketing committees including Buddy’s Race Against Cancer and United Way.

Teenagers who leave the party should not be allowed to come back.

- This rule will discourage anyone who hopes to drink or use drugs elsewhere from returning to the party.

Limit party attendance and time.

- If possible, make a guest list first and send out invitations to discourage crashers.
- Avoid open house parties. It is difficult for parents and teens to control this type of party.
- Set time limits that will enable the teens to get home at a reasonable time.

Set the ground rule before the party.

- Parents and teens should express their concerns about problems that could occur.
- Make sure your teen understands your expectations that the party will be drug and alcohol free.

For additional tips on hosting safe parties, please contact the Metropolitan Drug Commission or log onto www.metrodrug.org.

Metropolitan Drug Commission
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Fax: 865.588.0891

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



Announcements

Applications for the 2009-2010 Youth Action Council are now available!

The Youth Action Council (YAC)—A Voice for Youth is a collaborative partnership between the Metropolitan Drug Commission, the Knox County Mayor's Office and the City of Knoxville Mayor's Office. Current high school students are eligible to apply, and as many as 25 will be chosen. Applicants should be aware of key issues facing youth, as well as possess the desire and creativity to make a change in their community. Applications are available online at www.metrodrug.org or by calling (865) 588-5550. The deadline to apply is Friday, April 17, 2009.

Alcohol Retail Window Decals Offered.

In conjunction with the Metropolitan Drug Commission's "No Sale. No I.D. No Way." campaign, we will now offer window decals to alcohol merchants in addition to the buttons for employees to wear to make it easier for your employees to ask for ID. These decals "cling" to entry doors, windows or cooler doors. If you are a store operator and would like free window decals or buttons, contact us at (865) 588-5550.

MDC in Action

From Jan. 1 to Feb. 28, 2009, the MDC serviced the community by providing:

34 Treatment Referrals
3745 Prevention Materials & Resources

2008-2009 MDC Board of Directors

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NO SALE.

NO I.D.

NO WAY.

VALID I.D. REQUIRED.
Mandated by TCA 57-5-301





METROPOLITAN
DRUG COMMISSION

IF YOU ARENT 21
AND ARE IN POSSESSION OF BEER,
YOU COULD LOSE
YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE.



METROPOLITAN
DRUG COMMISSION

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

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