

# Alert

## Metropolitan Drug Commission

Strengthens Families. Protects Lives.

## ALCOHOL-RELATED CRASHES INCREASE IN SUMMER FOR TEEN DRIVERS

As temperatures heat up this summer, inexperienced teen drivers are spending more time on the road. Parents should be aware that car crashes are the leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15-20. Combine that with the fact that alcohol-related crashes are particularly high during the months of June, July and August, and parents have plenty of reason to worry about their teens as they head out on the highway.

Despite these troublesome statistics, teens tend to misperceive the dangers that come with summer driving. According to research conducted by Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and Liberty Mutual Insurance, only nine percent of teens believe that summer driving is highly dangerous. In addition, a whopping 55 percent of teens say that they or their friends are more likely to drive under the influence of alcohol during the summer.

Parents should stress the importance of responsible driving with their teen and present a strong and consistent message that underage drinking is unacceptable. Talk with your teen early and often about the dangers of drinking and driving. Know where your children are when they go out, who they are spending their free time with and what they will be doing.

Also, families should develop safe driving rules before their teens head out on the open road. Consequences should be clearly defined, but don't forget to reward your teen for good behavior as well.

By taking these measures, parents can help prevent and deter underage drinking and driving, keeping their family safe and healthy all summer long.



## MDC TO PARTICIPATE IN TOGETHER! HEALTHY KNOX INITIATIVE

The Institute of Medicine defines public health as "what we as a society do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy." The Metropolitan Drug Commission hopes to elicit community-wide behavioral change in Knoxville through its participation in the Knox County Health Department's "Together! Healthy Knox" initiative, bringing to the conversation its perspective on substance abuse and how it relates to overall health and well-being.

Launched in April 2009, "Together! Health Knox" is an initiative designed to facilitate positive change in community health by bringing together numerous health-related agencies, corporations and individual leaders in Knoxville. This approach is based on a broad definition of health where partnerships between various sectors of the community are emphasized. From medical centers to fitness facilities to substance abuse treatment and prevention organizations, "Together! Healthy Knox" operates under the assumption that all participants have something to contribute to the discussion.

According to the 2009 Health and Quality of Life Survey, participants identified drug and alcohol abuse as the most important risky behaviors in Knox County, impacting the overall health of the community. Fifty-six

percent of respondents said drug abuse was a key health issue in Knoxville, while 48 percent perceive alcohol abuse as most prevalent.

The Metropolitan Drug Commission is participating in the Leadership Team and is looking forward to engaging the entire community in the process of making Knoxville the healthiest city in the country. Through "Together! Healthy Knox," the Metropolitan Drug Commission hopes to improve the overall quality of life for everyone in Knox County by preventing and reducing the frequency of substance abuse in our area.

For more information about "Together! Healthy Knox," visit [www.healthyknox.org](http://www.healthyknox.org).



## PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE INCREASING AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A new report reveals that prescription drug misuse is on the rise among high school students. Is your child contributing to this statistic?

An astounding 21 percent of high school students report that they have at one time taken drugs not prescribed by their doctor, according to a study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That's one in five young adults abusing prescription drugs.

This misuse doesn't fall along gender lines, however. The most recent Knox County Health Department Youth Risk Behavioral Survey found that male and female students were equally likely to misuse prescription drugs such as Vicodin, Xanax and OxyContin. The survey also indicates that white students are more apt to abuse prescription drugs than their African-American or Hispanic peers.

Teens often misperceive prescription drugs to be "safer" than illicit drugs because they are legal and FDA approved. However, nonmedical use of prescription drugs is illegal and can have a negative impact on the user's health. They can even be more dangerous than illicit drugs because of their pure concentration.

Aside from borrowing medications from friends, teens often acquire prescription drugs from their home medicine cabinet. Parents can take precautions to safeguard their children and reduce access to prescription drugs in their home:



- Monitor your prescriptions carefully. Note the number of pills in each bottle and keep track of your refills. If your teen is given medication by a doctor, be sure to regulate its usage.
- Secure your prescriptions in a locked cabinet inaccessible by your teen. Ask friends and family members with whom your child visits to do the same.
- Dispose of old or unused prescriptions, removing all identifying labels. Put them in a sandwich bag to prevent leakage. Also, be mindful of the environment and don't flush pills down the toilet or drain unless instructed to do so.

To learn how to safely dispose your expired prescriptions, log on to [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm).

## SMOKELESS TOBACCO MINTS TIED TO UNINTENTIONAL POISONINGS IN CHILDREN

Research has long shown that smoking tobacco products is dangerous to one's health, especially children's health. However, recent reports reveal that smokeless tobacco can be just as harmful as cigarettes. In fact, smokeless tobacco products are the second most common cause of accidental poisoning among young children.

Tobacco "mints" are small, flavored pellets or sticks that dissolve on one's tongue. These mints are made with nicotine and have the same addictive properties and negative side effects as chewing tobacco or cigarettes. Sold in containers resembling Tic Tac mints, these candy-like products appeal to young children because of their packaging and taste.



According to tobacco-related reports to nationwide poison control centers, nearly 600 children a year unintentionally ingested smokeless tobacco products between 2006 and 2008. That's approximately 1,800 children in a three year period.

Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon co-authored legislation in 2009 that gave the FDA renewed power to monitor tobacco products and put smokeless tobacco mints on the administration's list of regulated products. The pair hopes they can prevent more tobacco poisonings throughout the United States.

While this problem is not widespread in Knoxville, parents must be aware of these products and take steps to keep them out of children's hands. Adults should inspect and monitor what their child is consuming and make sure the item is safe for ingestion. Remember, packaging can be deceiving. A second look may prevent a hospital stay for your child.

## 2010-2011 YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL MEMBERS ANNOUNCED

For six years, the Knoxville/Knox County Mayors' Youth Action Council (YAC) has served as "a voice for youth" in the Knoxville area. With the support of the Metropolitan Drug Commission, the Youth Action Council continues to influence public policy and provide a youth perspective in local government. At the end of the school year, the council elected 18 new members to serve as youth representatives to elicit community change.

The newly appointed members of the 2010-2011 Youth Action Council are:

Hester Lam (Chair), <i>Hardin Valley Academy</i>	Dakota Battle, <i>Bearden High School</i>
Nicole Nabozniak, <i>Catholic High School</i>	Brittany Morgan, <i>Fulton High School</i>
Shelby Goddard, <i>South-Doyle High School</i>	Preston Johnson, <i>Austin East Magnet School</i>
Tori Strother, <i>Hardin Valley Academy</i>	Rebeka Carson, <i>Farragut High School</i>
Montess Burt, <i>West High School</i>	Sarah Rennich, <i>West High School</i>
Bethany Brewer, <i>Carter High School</i>	Kathryn Nelson, <i>West High School</i>
Missy Denton, <i>Hardin Valley Academy</i>	Anna Rennich, <i>West High School</i>
Sharena Domingo, <i>Fulton High School</i>	Liam Trainor, <i>South-Doyle High School</i>
Corey Hairrell, <i>Gibbs High School</i>	Will Locklear, <i>West High School</i>

The Youth Action Council is involved in various projects and initiatives throughout the school year. At this year's YAC retreat, the new members identified its main priorities for the upcoming year, including improving teacher quality and increasing student voice in schools and local government.

In order to achieve these goals, YAC students will partner with the University of Tennessee's Howard Baker Center and United Way of Greater Knoxville. Some of this year's planned projects include: working with the Howard Baker Center to expand high school government course curriculum to include more information about local government; exploring ways that students can provide input for school improvements; and collaborating with United Way on a statewide teacher quality initiative.

## METROPOLITAN DRUG COMMISSION WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEES

Big changes are happening at the Metropolitan Drug Commission, and with those changes comes some new additions to the MDC staff.

Karen Pershing heads up the organization as its new executive director. Pershing, a 15-year veteran of the public health field, brings with her extensive experience in health education and drug prevention. Most recently, Pershing served as the director of community assessment and planning for the United Way of Greater Knoxville. She is a member of the Tennessee Public Health Association where she served as vice president for the East Tennessee Grand Division and chairperson for the Resolutions Committee. Pershing holds a Master's degree in public health with a concentration in health planning and administration.

"We are thrilled to have Ms. Pershing on board with us," Metropolitan Drug Commission chair Marilyn Roddy said. "She will be a wonderful asset to our organization."

Heather Sutton has been named MDC's media relations and project director. Sutton brings with her experience in public relations and journalism. Her past experience includes work in communication as a member of the public relations and events staff at Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee. Prior to that, Sutton interned for Moxley Carmichael public relations firm and WBIR-TV. She also served as copy editor and reporter for the Tennessee Journalist during college. Sutton holds a Bachelor's degree in communication from the University of Tennessee.



*Pictured in the photo from left to right, bottom row: Tori Strother, Hardin Valley Academy; Nicole Nabozniak, Catholic High; Shelby Goddard, South-Doyle High; Hester Lam (Chair), Hardin Valley Academy; Montess Burt, West High; Bethany Brewer, Carter High. Left to Right, middle row: Missy Denton, Hardin Valley Academy; Sharena Domingo, Fulton High; Liam Trainor, South-Doyle High; Corey Hairrell, Gibbs High; Will Locklear, West High. Left to Right, back row: Dakota Battle, Bearden High; Brittany Morgan, Fulton High; Preston Johnson, Austin East Magnet; Rebeka Carson, Farragut High; Sarah Rennich, West High; Kathryn Nelson, West High; Anna Rennich, West High*

Metropolitan Drug Commission project director Sarah Harder will be working closely with the new YAC members to facilitate these goals, serving as advisor to the council.

"We at the MDC are very excited to continue working with YAC," Harder said. "This new group of YAC members is truly passionate about the issues they've identified, and I am looking forward to helping them meet these goals in any way I can."

"I also look forward to working with Leah Adinolfi, who continues the Metropolitan Drug Commission's partnership with the Howard Baker Center and Gavin Luter with United Way. With these groups working together, the sky is the limit as to what we can achieve!"

For more information about YAC, visit [www.metrodrug.org/action/youthactioncouncil.aspx](http://www.metrodrug.org/action/youthactioncouncil.aspx).



*Pictured in the photo from left to right: Sarah Harder, Project Director; Karen Pershing, Executive Director; Heather Sutton, Media Relations and Project Director*

Sarah Harder joins MDC as its project director. Harder has an extensive background in public health and grant management. Harder most recently served as public health educator for the Knox County Health Department. Prior to that, she worked as the health department's disease intervention specialist. She is a member of the Tennessee Public Health Association and volunteers with Young Williams Animal Center. Harder received her Master's degree in public health from the University of Tennessee.

"We are excited to have such wonderfully trained and talented individuals joining MDC," Karen Pershing, MDC executive director, said. "The strength of any successful organization is its staff, and we are confident that Ms. Sutton and Ms. Harder will be great additions."

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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](http://www.metrodrug.org)**

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

-The Metropolitan Drug Commission is now on your favorite social media websites. Connect with us to read the latest news on drugs and alcohol, view student PSAs and more! Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MetroDrug](http://www.facebook.com/MetroDrug) and on Twitter @MetroDrug!

- Help us reduce paper waste and conserve our environment! "Go Green" this month and sign up for MDC's eNewsletter. You will receive all the information offered in our print newsletter straight to your email inbox. Go to <http://metrodrug.org/register.aspx> to register for the email version.

- Thank you to Mayor Haslam for passing a resolution declaring June 26 the International Day Against Drug Abuse in Knoxville. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1987, this important day was established to raise awareness about the major challenge illicit drugs represent to society as a whole.

- Save the date! The Symposium for the Advancement of Family Therapy will offer a workshop titled "Promoting Health Through Family Therapy" October 18-19 at the Knoxville Airport Hilton Hotel. Visit [www.safinc.org](http://www.safinc.org) for more information or contact Margaret Fugua at (865) 688-0163.

- ALERT is getting a makeover. Our updated newsletter will feature all the information you need in a new and improved format. Coming this Fall to a mailbox near you!

## MDC in Action

From April 1 to June 31, 2010, the MDC serviced the community by providing:

- 43 Treatment Referrals
- 608 Prevention Materials & Resources

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To submit an announcement or article to the Metropolitan Drug Commission's **ALERT** newsletter, please contact Heather Sutton at (865) 588-5550 or [hsutton@metrodrug.org](mailto:hsutton@metrodrug.org).



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