

# Alert

## Metropolitan Drug Commission

Strengthens Families. Protects Lives.

## STUDENTS SHOCK STORES WITH STICKERS, DISCOURAGE PARENTS FROM BUYING ALCOHOL FOR TEENS

Throughout the month of April, the Metropolitan Drug Commission will engage area high school students in a project entitled "Sticker Shock."

Project Sticker Shock is designed to discourage adults from buying alcohol for individuals under the age of 21. Armed with stickers touting the slogan "Underage Drinking is a Mom and Pop Operation," youth participating in Project Sticker Shock will partner with area grocery stores to place the stickers on multi-packs of beer and other alcohol products that might appeal to underage drinkers. The students hope to raise awareness about underage drinking and its related problems.

This year's initiative is aimed at parents who provide their child with alcohol at home. Statistics show that 65 percent of kids who drink get their alcohol from their own home. Many parents often misconceive that allowing their teen to drink within the home is safe because they can control the amount of alcohol their child is consuming. Parents may also think that if they model responsible, moderate drinking to their teen, their child will copy that behavior when parents are not present.

While parents may have good intentions, research shows that this philosophy can cause more harm than good. According to a recent study published in the January 2010 issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, teens that drink with their parents are more likely to drink when they are outside the home and vice-versa.

They also tend to consume more alcoholic beverages on average than peers who do not drink with their parents. Even more alarming, these teens (along with other teen drinkers) are at a greater risk of developing alcohol problems that may affect school performance and attendance and increase violent behavior.

## JOBLESSNESS SHOWN TO DRIVE YOUNG PEOPLE TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL

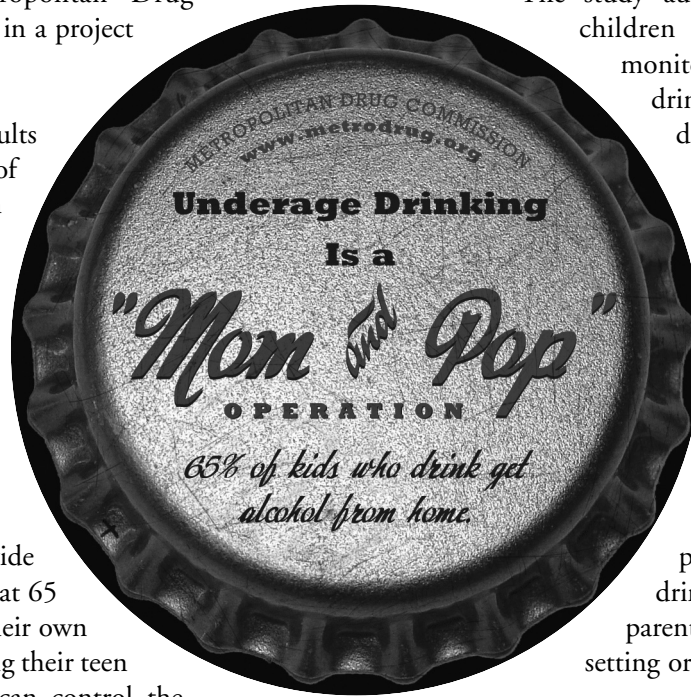
While the economy is in a downturn, drug and alcohol use is on the rise for young East Tennesseans.

In Knoxville, the unemployment rate is at 10.7 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment numbers for the state of Tennessee are even more drastic, at 10.9 percent as of December 2009, up from 10.2 percent in November. As more and more young people find themselves out of a job, drugs and alcohol are being abused more frequently to combat feelings of hopelessness, despair and fear.

According to a recent study conducted by the U.K.-based Prince's Trust, one in 10 unemployed young adults say joblessness has pushed them to use drugs and alcohol. These individuals were also likely to be in poorer health than their employed peers and experience frequent unhappiness. These findings are based on interviews with over 2,000 unemployed 16 to 25 year olds in the U.K.

Economist David Blanchflower says these effects are quite common in young people who are out of work.

"Unemployment has a knock-on effect on a young person's self-esteem, their emotional stability and overall well-being," Blanchflower said in the report.



The study authors tracked 428 Dutch families with two children ages 13-15. The results demonstrated that monitored drinking does not discourage teens from drinking when they are alone. In fact, teens that drink with their parents are more likely to consume alcohol no matter the setting. These findings contradict advice that suggests parents should drink with their children to teach them responsible drinking habits.

Dr. Haske van der Vorst, the lead researcher on the study, says that prevention is key.

"If parents want to reduce the risk that their child will become a heavy drinker or problem drinker in adolescence, they should try to postpone the age at which their child starts drinking," van der Vorst said. "I would advise parents to prohibit their child from drinking, in any setting or on any occasion."

Parents can prevent underage drinking inside and outside the home in a number of ways:

- Be absolutely clear with your kids that you don't want them using alcohol. Ever. Anywhere. Don't leave room for interpretation. And talk often about the dangers and results of alcohol abuse. Once or twice a year is not enough.
- Create rules—and discuss in advance the consequences of breaking them. Make your expectations clear. Don't make empty threats or let the rule-breaker off the hook. Don't impose harsh or unexpected new punishments.
- Be a living, day-to-day example of your value system. Know that there is no such thing as "do as I say, not as I do" when it comes to alcohol or breaking the law.

"The long and downward spiral of unemployment can also leave young people prone to more serious mental health issues, drug and alcohol addictions, homelessness or worse."

Instead of turning to drugs and alcohol, there are a number of other ways to combat unemployment loneliness:

- **Volunteer** – Volunteering a few days a week will get you out of the house, boost your mood and give you a fresh, new perspective. This will also provide you with the opportunity to interact with others as you work towards a good cause.
- **Exercise** – Exercise is a great way to stay healthy and raise serotonin levels (the "feel good" hormone). It will also give you a feeling of accomplishment and mastery, increasing your self-confidence. Participating in a group fitness class is another way you can meet new people and have some fun.
- **Go to the park** – East Tennessee has many lovely public parks and recreation areas to take a walk, have a picnic or just enjoy a nice day. Some experts say getting a little sunshine can positively affect your state of mind.

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- **Join a Club** – From an art clubs to a business clubs to sports clubs, there are numerous social and professional groups you can take part in East Tennessee. In addition, club membership gives you the opportunity to network with other young professionals in the area who could help you land a job.

By simply getting involved in the community and keeping busy, many people can get through this tough economic time, without the use of drugs and alcohol

If you or someone you know has a problem with alcohol or drugs, it is important to seek professional treatment for the individual. Addiction is a **primary**, **progressive** and sometimes **fatal** disease:

- **Primary** - Addiction is not a symptom of another disease; it is not

caused by another disease. However, other illnesses can have an influence on a person's misuse or dependence on alcohol/drugs.

- **Progressive** - Addiction becomes worse as the user continues to drink/use drugs. The longer the person uses, the worse the consequences of the use, and the harder it is for the person to stop using. This is why it is so important to detect and treat problem drinking/problem drug use before it overwhelms the user and his/her family.
- **Potentially fatal** - Addiction to alcohol or other drugs takes its toll on the mind, body and spirit. Death from cirrhosis of the liver, suicide from depression as a result of the consequences of drinking/drug use and fatal traffic accidents while under the influence of alcohol or another drug are common causes of death among those addicted. Knox County has one of the highest per person rates of alcohol-related deaths in East Tennessee.

## TEEN DRINKERS MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO NERVE TISSUE DAMAGE IN BRAIN

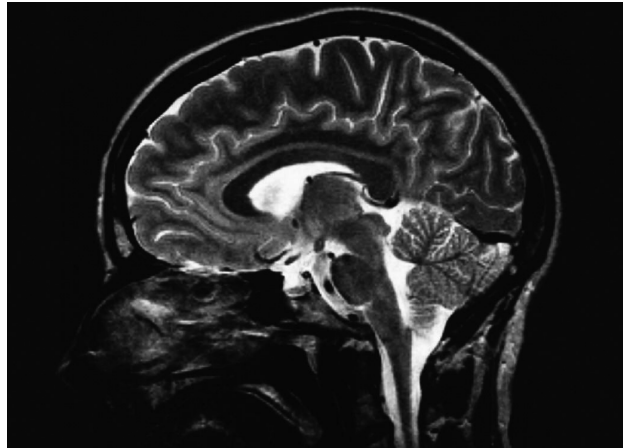
Recent research shows that teen drinkers are more likely to suffer nerve damage in their brains than those who abstain from alcohol.

Neuroscientist Susan Tapert of the University of California at San Diego and colleagues studied the brains of 12- to 14-year-olds prior to using alcohol and continuing as they began drinking. They discovered that those individuals who used alcohol did worse on thinking and memory tests, although the impairment level varied by gender.

When comparing the brain structure of teens that drink and teens that do not drink, the researchers discovered that drinkers show more nerve tissue damage than their non-drinking counterparts.

“They appeared to have a number of little dings throughout their brains’ white matter, indicating poor quality,” Tapert told National Public Radio.

White tissue damage inhibits the communication between brain cells. Such damage can cause attention deficits in males and difficulty interpreting visual stimuli for females. And teens don't have to drink regularly to experience alcohol's negative effects. According to Tapert's study, it is not the frequency, but the amount of alcohol consumed that inflicts the most damage. In fact, the research subjects only drank



alcohol once or twice a month but typically consumed at least four or five beverages at one time.

Tapert says teens are particularly at risk for alcohol-related nerve damage because their brains are continually developing throughout adolescence, making their brains more vulnerable to the harmful effects of alcohol.

Previous findings also have confirmed the negative effects of teen alcohol consumption. According to Dr. Ken Winters of the University of Minnesota, current research indicates that brain development is still in progress through a young person's early to mid-20s.

Even a “single, moderate dose of alcohol can disrupt learning more powerfully in people in their early twenties, compared to those in their late twenties,” according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. “The effects of repeated alcohol consumption during adolescence may also be long-lasting. Studies in humans have detected cognitive impairments in adolescent alcohol users weeks after they stopped drinking, and a different pattern of brain response to tests of memory than among non-abusers.”

The best way to combat underage drinking is through preventative measures designed to restrict adolescent access to alcohol. For tips on how to keep your growing teen away from alcohol and drugs, visit [www.metrodrug.org](http://www.metrodrug.org).

## KNOXVILLE'S FBI REACHES LOCAL YOUTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH MDC, AREA SCHOOLS

The FBI has been a close partner of the Metropolitan Drug Commission, assisting with prevention efforts at Richard Yoakley Alternative School and other programs for many years. One of the FBI's latest outreach efforts includes supporting the MDC's Youth Above the Influence (YATI) Program at Fulton High School. Special Agents from the Knoxville Field Office have been meeting with students on a quarterly basis to talk about topics such as the FBI SWAT Team, Evidence Response Team, and Violent Crimes including bank robberies and gang activities.

“The small group setting allows students to ask pointed questions and learn valuable lessons about making positive choices” Stacie Bohanan, Public Affairs Specialist with the FBI in Knoxville. “It also exposes students to employment opportunities they may never have considered previously.”

Meeting the needs of young people in and around the Knoxville area is a priority for the Knoxville Division of the FBI. Through initiatives such as the Adopt-A-School Program, the Junior Special Agent Program, and the FBI Teen Academy, many of those needs are being met. By creating programs to help kids learn how to improve academically,

become good citizens, and above all, to resist bad influences that could lead them to crime, drug use, gang participation, or violence, the FBI is working to ensure a positive future for youth in Knoxville and the region.



Members of Youth Above the Influence at Fulton High School with FBI Special Agent Bukowski.

## METROPOLITAN DRUG COMMISSION ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE "A-PARENT MISCOMMUNICATION" PSA CONTEST

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – We have a winner! The Metropolitan Drug Commission in partnership with the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth has determined the winners of the "A-Parent Miscommunication" public service announcement (PSA) contest. Each video entry touted a creative message designed to discourage underage drinking within the local community. With several schools participating countywide, two Knoxville high schools came out on top in the student category.

The Austin East Roadrunners were the grand prize winners with their PSA entitled "Like Father, Like Son." The team members were Jazmond Wright, Anthony Page, Caleb Pleasant and Dejon McGill. The PSA began airing on WBIR and WVLT on January 16 and will run throughout the spring months. Each team member took home \$125, and the team's teacher was awarded \$500 towards the purchase of classroom materials.

The second place team was Fulton High School's Television III Class with a PSA entitled "Fatal Consequences." The team consisted of Trey Townsend,

Caleb Garrett, Jake Reilly, Chris Carden and Devin Marusa. The team members received \$50 each, and an additional \$250 was awarded for classroom use.



(Pictured front: Jazmond Wright, Team Captain  
Back row left to right: Dejon McGill; Anthony Page;  
Caleb Pleasant.)

Beginning last December, Knox County public and private high school students in grades 9-12 were invited to produce a 15 or 30 second PSA aimed at informing parents that:

Underage drinking is illegal and dangerous, not a rite of passage.

Parents have a lawful responsibility to prohibit youth access to alcohol. (According to state law, adults who host parties where minors are present have a "duty of care," meaning they can be held liable and in violation of the law if underage drinking occurs, even in cases where adults do not furnish the alcohol.)

Sixty-five percent of teens who drink say they get their alcohol from family and friends.

Winners were determined based on factors such as originality, structure, clarity, adaptability, impact and style. The video entries were developed and produced by the students with guidance from school faculty and parents.

## NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2010-2011 KNOXVILLE/KNOX COUNTY MAYORS' YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL

For a seventh year, the Metropolitan Drug Commission, in partnership with the Knox County Mayor's office and the City of Knoxville Mayor's office, will sponsor a collaborative project called the Youth Action Council (YAC). The YAC serves as a representative body for teens in Knoxville/Knox County charged with ensuring that the opinions and concerns of youth are voiced, thereby strengthening the sense of community and civic duty among teens.



This project is designed to ensure that teens in Knoxville and Knox County have input into the policies that affect them and to increase awareness among government representatives and the general public about issues facing children and youth. The Youth Action Council has been responsible for



coordinating the annual Knoxville Youth Summit, establishing a student representative position on the Knox County Board of Education, and engaging as many as 1,000 teens in over 3,000 hours of community service. In other words, the YAC not only provides opportunities for young people to better understand how our local government operates, but allows teens to experience collaboration and team building while engaging in civic service.

As many as twenty-five high school students will be chosen for the Youth Action Council. The application process is underway and current high school students in Knox County (public, private or home schools) are encouraged to apply by April 16, 2010. 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 and recommendation forms are available at [www.metrodrug.org](http://www.metrodrug.org) or by calling (865) 588-5550.

## KNOXVILLE TEENS MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THE 2010 KNOXVILLE YOUTH SUMMIT AND SPHERE AWARDS CELEBRATION

**Saturday, April 10, 2010**  
**Central High School**

2-6 p.m. Get involved in service to the community!  
6 p.m. Get recognized for your service to the community!  
7:30 p.m. Celebrate at the after-party with HOT 104.5.



Participants will receive documentation for up to 6 hours of community service. The Knoxville Youth Summit is FREE and participants also get into the awards banquet and after-party FREE! Pre-Registration is required.

SPHERE Awards Tickets for adults and teens not participating in the Youth Summit are \$10.

Nominate an outstanding teenager or teen advisor today!

Nomination forms for the 2010 SPHERE Awards can be found, along with SPHERE Awards Banquet ticket information and Knoxville Youth Summit Registration, at [www.metrodrug.org](http://www.metrodrug.org) or by calling (865) 588-5550 x104.



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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



After ten years of incredible achievement, the Metropolitan Drug Commission's third executive director, Catherine Thatcher Brunson, announced in January she would be stepping down. Since 1999, Brunson has brought significant attention, both locally and nationally, to the Metropolitan Drug Commission and redirected it from an organization in dire financial straits into a financially sound, sustainable organization. Ms. Brunson's list of achievements is vast and the lives saved by her efforts continue to increase in fold. She has had a significant impact driving responsible policy change at both the state and national levels and Ms. Brunson is nationally recognized as a leader and pioneer in substance abuse prevention and awareness.

- Some of Brunson's most significant achievements include:
- Bringing the organization out of the red and into sound financial standing within one year
  - Increased access to treatment for thousands of Knox Countians with addictive disorders
  - Expanding community outreach to build capacity to address substance abuse problems
  - Receiving a Presidential appointment to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy as a Commissioner for the Drug-Free Communities Advisory Commission
  - Receiving the FBI's Community Directors Leadership Award
  - Receiving the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Underage Drinking Laws Award for outstanding efforts to combat underage drinking
  - Highlighted in several national written and video publications for her programming and advocacy efforts
  - Selected to serve as trainer and technical assistance consultant for the National Coalition Institute since its initiation by Congress to increase the knowledge, capacity, and accountability of community coalitions across the nation
  - Achieved population-level reductions in adolescent binge drinking and 30-day use

Ms. Brunson leaves the Metropolitan Drug Commission in the most solid financial position in the organization's history with diversified funding secured for the next five years. She will begin by taking some well-deserved time off to travel and spend time with her family. While her presence will certainly be missed here at the Metropolitan Drug Commission, Ms. Brunson will remain in the field in which she is so passionate and will continue to draw on her expertise by providing training and technical assistance to communities throughout the country and furthering her prescription drug initiative.

## MDC in Action

From December 1 to January 31, 2009, the MDC serviced the community by providing:

52 Treatment Referrals

### 2009-2010 MDC Board of Directors

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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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