



Alert

METROPOLITAN DRUG COMMISSION
strengthens families. protects lives.

Summer can be a risky time for teens

As classes wind down and temperatures heat up, teens across Knox County are gearing up for long days of lazy summer fun. Unfortunately, this time of freedom and independence can leave teens more susceptible to alcohol and other drug use.

Research shows that teens with excessive spare time are 50 percent more likely than other teens to smoke, drink or use illegal drugs. Already, teens in Knox County are abusing alcohol and other drugs at higher rates and at younger ages compared to previous years. According to the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- 17.2% of high school students say they tried alcohol before age 13
- 64.5% of high school students report consuming alcohol at least once in their lifetime
- 22.6% of high school students say they participated in binge drinking (consuming five or more alcoholic beverages in one session) in the past month
- 19.5% of teens say they have taken a prescription medication non-medically at least once in their lifetime
- 20.4% of teens have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days
- 23.3% of high school students have used marijuana in the past 30 days



“It is extremely beneficial for teens to stay active and involved during the summer months,” Karen Pershing, executive director of the Metropolitan Drug Commission, said. “Part-time summer jobs, camps, classes, community service and sports all stimulate the mind, build good character and promote positive behaviors. Plus, a busy schedule affords teens fewer opportunities to experiment with drugs and alcohol.”

In addition to staying active, Pershing stresses the importance of parental involvement.

“Teens with ‘hands-on’ parents have a 25 percent lower risk of smoking, drinking and using drugs as with ‘hands-off’

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Don't Let Booze Float Your Boat



Stay safe out on the waterways this summer by boating sober. Not only is boating under the influence unsafe, it's illegal. Parents, if you serve teens, you may serve time. Adults can be fined or even jailed for providing alcohol to a minor.

Practice safe boating this summer, everyone!

Local leaders team up to tackle underage drinking



Local policymakers and law enforcement representatives are coming together to fight teen drinking.

The Metropolitan Drug Commission, Knoxville Police Department, Knox County Sheriff's Office and TopShelf Responsible Beverage Service have united with Knoxville, Knox County and Farragut beer boards to address adolescent access to alcohol. The new Underage Drinking Policy Panel is charged with developing effective strategies to prevent underage alcohol sales in retail stores and restaurants.

"Underage drinking is a community issue. There are a multitude of causes and conditions that contribute to this problem, including retail access," Knoxville Police Chief David Rausch said. "This initiative can help keep alcohol out of the hands of minors while strengthening and supporting local businesses."

Underage drinking rates have increased dramatically in the last two years. According to the 2009 Knox County Youth Risk Behavior Survey, more than 36 percent of teens reported alcohol use within the last month, increasing from 29.7 percent in 2007. Of those who drink, approximately 22 percent of high school students say they participated in binge drinking, defined as consuming five or more alcoholic beverages in one session.

In response, the Metropolitan Drug Commission sought guidance from local policymakers and law enforcement. The organization coordinated the first meeting in March to discuss ways underage drinking could be prevented. Training resources designed to help businesses adhere to underage drinking laws also were introduced, including TopShelf's *Minors: Reducing a Major Liability* DVD training toolkits. The toolkits can be used by retailers as an on-site orientation or refresher course on proper carding procedures.

Now in its fourth month, the group has identified three priorities: training, enforcement and policy. Currently, the group is looking at differences and similarities in city, county and Farragut beer codes, fines and procedures. The group hopes that stronger, more consistent policies will eliminate confusion among retailers and increase compliance rates.

One member of the panel knows firsthand the tragedy associated

with underage drinking. As a former educator and administrator, Knoxville city councilwoman Brenda Palmer hopes the work of the policy panel can help keep other teens safe.

"When I was in the high school work environment, several of my students were killed in underage drinking motor vehicle accidents. In a middle school setting, a student came to the 8th grade dance after consuming a fifth of vodka, went into alcohol shock and died before the paramedics could arrive," Palmer said. "It really gets to you when you see those empty seats in a classroom. I think the work of the panel can make the beer boards and the community mindful that underage drinking isn't a rite of passage and can have very serious consequences."

The panel meets on the third Thursday of every month. The next meeting is scheduled for July 21 at the Metropolitan Drug Commission's office, located at 4930 Lyons View Pike. All meetings are open to the public and the media is welcome.

"The fight against teen drinking cannot be won alone. We are thrilled to see such passion and commitment on the part of our local and state officials," Pershing said. "Through collaboration and cooperation, we can contribute to a healthier, safer environment for our children."

For more information about the underage drinking policy panel or to request a free *Minors: Reducing a Major Liability* DVD training toolkit, contact the Metropolitan Drug Commission at (865) 588-5550 or visit www.metrodrug.org.



"Make It A Night To Remember" prom and graduation campaign a success

This prom and graduation season, the Metropolitan Drug Commission collaborated with local high schools, retail stores and the media to promote a safe and sober prom.

In partnership with the East Tennessee Regional Prevention Advisory Council, the organization designed a social marketing campaign to discourage underage drinking. MDC coalition members distributed prom cards to local tuxedo, dress and flower shops with messages promoting a safe, alcohol-free prom. Matching posters also were given to Knox County high schools to strengthen the message and extend the campaign's reach. Additionally, WBIR-TV produced two public service announcements aimed at parents that ran on the network throughout April and May.

game of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" with questions focused on underage drinking facts and statistics. The students worked in teams to answer the questions and win prizes. MDC returned to Gibbs the following week for a more formal presentation at the PTSA meeting.

The organization also purchased drawstring bags for graduating seniors with an alcohol-free message. These bags were provided to more than 1,600 students at Gibbs, Powell, South Doyle, Carter, Farragut and Austin East. Additionally, a sample intercom announcement was distributed the week before graduation to raise awareness about the risks associated with teen drinking.



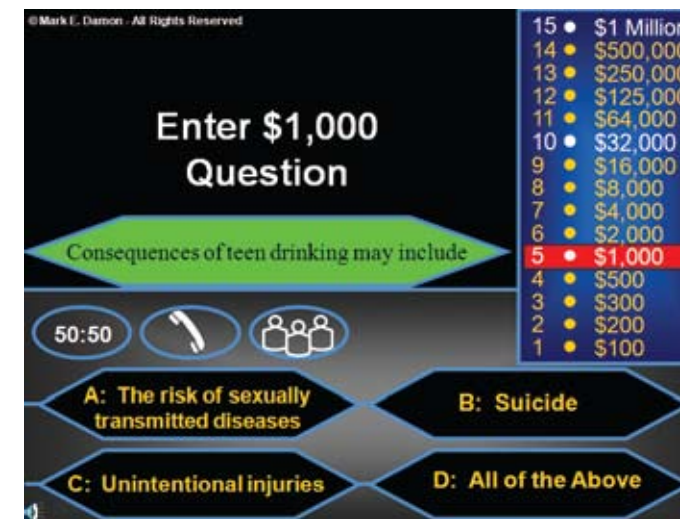
The Metropolitan Drug Commission also worked with the Knoxville News Sentinel to publish a series of op-ed articles discussing teen drinking. The series highlighted various perspectives on underage drinking from some of Knoxville's most influential leaders. Several MDC board members contributed articles, including Knox County Attorney General Randy Nichols, Knoxville Police Chief David Rausch, Dr. Martha Buchanan of the Knox County Health Department, Tim Wright of AAA of East Tennessee and West High School graduate Anna Rennich.

"Through these local and regional efforts, we hope to change the social norms surrounding underage drinking and create ongoing dialogue between adults and teens," Heather Sutton, Media Relations and Project Director, said. "We are grateful to have such outstanding community partners working with us in this effort. I look forward to working with them on future outreach campaigns."

For more information about underage drinking or to schedule a presentation, contact Heather Sutton at hsutton@metrodrug.org.



Photo courtesy of TopShelf Responsible Beverage Service



Later that month, MDC was invited to Gibbs High School for an interactive presentation highlighting the dangers of alcohol during the students' lunch period. The presentation was adapted into a



MDC COMMEMORATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Metropolitan Drug Commission has enjoyed much success over its long history. To celebrate, the organization will host a fundraising dinner on **Thursday, August 4** at 6:30 p.m. at The Foundry.

A short commemorative video also will be shown as a tribute to the Metropolitan Drug Commission's 25 years of service in Knoxville. The video will feature testimonies from community members who have contributed to MDC's success as a staff, coalition or board member.

Honorary guest panelists for the evening include:

- Richard Lambert – Special Agent in Charge, FBI
- Dr. James McIntyre – Superintendent, Knox County Schools
- Roger Brooksbank, MD, FACEP – TeamHealth
- Michael Carringer, MD – University of Tennessee Medical Center

Robin Wilhoit of WBIR-TV, Knoxville's NBC affiliate, will serve as moderator.

Table sponsorships and individual tickets are on sale now at <http://www.metrodrug.org/web/about-us/25th-anniversary> or by calling (865) 588-5550.

Knox Youth Action Council says teens should provide input for teacher evaluations

On May 16, members of the Knoxville/Knox County Mayors' Youth Action Council (YAC) asked the Knox County School Board to consider including student input in teacher evaluations.

The council's Teacher Effectiveness subcommittee is advocating for the development of a study committee to identify researched-based student perception tools to be included as a formal part of the teacher evaluation process. If implemented, the survey would be given to all Knox County students this fall. Student perceptions would serve as one of several indicators of teacher quality.

Knox County School Board member Pam Trainor believes including the youth perspective would enhance the current evaluation process.

"I would love to see it as part of an evaluation, no different than how their superiors evaluate them," Trainor said. "A student's perspective brings another color to the fabric. Students are there day-to-day. They get to know the teacher and know what they're all about."

This project arose two years ago when the council began strategizing ways in which students could have a say in their own education. That spring, the group piloted a YAC-developed course evaluation system at South Doyle High School. Superintendent Dr. Jim McIntyre later recommended that the course evaluation be expanded to other Knox County high schools.

The development of Tennessee's Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee (TEAC) pushed the council to strengthen their efforts. Created through Race to the Top funds, TEAC developed a new evaluation process for the state that would help educators identify strengths and opportunities for improvement, leading to increased student achievement. However, the evaluation criterion did not include student opinions and viewpoints.

"We, as students, are completely dependent on our teachers to ensure that we receive the best possible education. If we don't feel our teachers are performing up to our standards, I think administrators and teachers should know so they can make improvements," Anna Rennich, former vice chair of the Youth Action Council, said. "Likewise, teachers that are doing a great job should know we appreciate them."

In October 2010, the subcommittee distributed teacher evaluation surveys in three high schools. More than 1,100 students at Austin East, Gibbs and Farragut High Schools participated in the study. The students were asked to choose the five most important traits teachers should have in order to be effective.

Overall, four teacher traits prevailed. Knox County students define an effective teacher to be one who can adapt to the needs of their students by being approachable, reliable, fair and willing to help. Almost 90 percent of those surveyed also indicated that it is important for the student to actively participate in his or her own education.

"I really do think students want to become involved. I can't tell you how many times I have heard my friends complain about a teacher, but the sad thing is they have no constructive way of exercising that frustration," Rennich said. "A survey would allow them to share with their instructors the specific ways they can improve their teaching. This would really make students feel like active participants in their education, which is something we crave."

Similar initiatives have been introduced in cities across the country. Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project has been implemented in Dallas, Denver, Memphis, Hillsborough County, FL and New York City. Researchers analyze data from five core areas, including "student perceptions of the classroom instructional environment." Preliminary results indicate a steady increase in graduation rates among students at participating schools.

"YAC has worked very hard this year to put together a presentation that supports the idea of incorporating student voice into a teacher evaluation," Sarah Harder, MDC project director and YAC coordinator, said. "We just hope that the school board, Knox County Schools and Dr. McIntyre will take this information and use it to expand and strengthen the current evaluation system."

While a final decision has yet to be reached, Rennich feels confident that the youth perspective will be heard. "I loved hearing all of the positive feedback from the board members," she said. "I definitely think we will see student perspective included. I think we still have a lot of work to do, but now the community and the board are aware of the issue and its importance, which is a huge step in the right direction."

As for Trainor, the Youth Action Council's proposal is not only a testament to the power of young people, but an encouraging sign for local educators.

"These kids have a piece in this puzzle. Their voice has got to be heard. They are the reason we are here. For them to take that and run with it gives us hope for the children we are educating."

For more information about YAC, visit the "What We Do" tab at www.metrodrug.org.

2011-2012 Youth Action Council members announced



The Metropolitan Drug Commission would like to welcome 19 new members to the Youth Action Council. The members of the 2011-2012 class are:

- Rebekah Jackson, Hardin Valley Academy*
- Raney Shattuck, West High School*
- Zoe Holcomb, Halls High School*
- Rebeka Carson, Farragut High School*
- Melissa Denton, Hardin Valley High School*
- Sharena Domingo, Fulton High School*
- Sharon Bao, Farragut High School*
- Gustav Vogel, Webb School of Knoxville*
- Graham Treasure, West High School*
- Ramie Fathy, Farragut High School*
- Blaine Coyle, West High School*
- Bradley Dowdy, Bearden High School*
- Marlissah Hayes, West High School*
- Anitrea Harris, Hardin Valley Academy*
- Victoria Strother, Hardin Valley Academy*
- Preston Johnson, Austin-East High*
- Star Sanders, South Doyle High School*
- Rebecca Denton, Karns High School*
- Liam Trainor, South Doyle High School*

YAC develops an online curriculum



With the Youth Action Council, the action never stops. Visit www.metrodrug.org to learn more about Citizens' GPS, a web-based program that can help teens learn more about local government and empower them to get involved.

Substance abusers sometimes suffer underlying mental illness



It is a common occurrence in the behavioral health field. Individuals in treatment for substance abuse problems are exhibiting signs of mental illness. Conversely, those with mental illness are dependent on alcohol and drugs to alleviate their suffering. For years, healthcare professionals and researchers have tracked the link between substance abuse and mental health. This data has led to an increase in patients diagnosed with what are called co-occurring disorders, or CODs.

Co-occurring disorder refers to a person who suffers from one or more substance abuse problems and one or more psychological disorders. The terms "dual diagnosis" or "dual disorders" also may be used to describe this combination of conditions, although the use of these terms is less prevalent today. While these conditions may feed into or worsen the other, these conditions function freely of one another.

Co-occurring disorders are common but frequently left undiagnosed and untreated. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), about 50 percent of individuals with severe mental health disturbances are also substance abusers. And it is not just adults who suffer. Teens with mental health problems are four times more likely to become addicted to alcohol and

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important Dates

- 7/4: Independence Day
- August
- 8/15: First Day of School
- September 5:
- 9/1: National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month
- 9/5: Labor Day
- 9/9: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day
- 9/26: National Family Day

New Digital Digs

Our website has undergone a major overhaul this spring. The new and improved site boasts increased functionality and ease of use for our users without sacrificing the appearance you love and content you want. Log on to www.metrodrug.org today and take a look around. And while you're there, take our short, five question survey and let us know what you think!

Save The Date!

Join us for our Drug-Free Community Coalition meeting on Tuesday, July 26 at noon in the Knox County Health Department's Community Room. Lunch is provided. For more information, click the "Join Our Efforts" banner on our website or email Sarah Harder at sharder@metrodrug.org.

The Knox County Medication Collection Coalition is hosting a prescription drug take-back event on Saturday, July 23 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Food City, Northgate Plaza. The collection events are part of a nationwide effort to reduce the amount of drugs entering water systems from either being flushed or poured down drains. For more information, contact John Homa, Knoxville Solid Waste Public Manager, at (865) 215-2872



Be Eco-friendly

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. To register, go to www.metrodrug.org.



Get Connected

Do you "like" us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter? If not, what are you waiting for? Connect with us to read the latest news on drugs and alcohol, discover upcoming events and more. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MetroDrug and on Twitter @MetroDrug!



Show your support. Make a contribution.

The Metropolitan Drug Commission has made significant strides in combating substance abuse in our area. In order to continue these successful programs, we need your financial support. Your charitable contribution will be used to extend our reach to youth and adults throughout Knox County.

Supporters can now donate online by clicking the "Donate Via PayPal" button at www.metrodrug.org. Offline donations can be made by calling (865) 588-5550.



The Metropolitan Drug Commission is a 501c(3) organization. All contributions are tax-deductible.

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



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Local businesses committed to keeping alcohol away from minors

The Knoxville Police Department and Knox County Sheriff's Department stepped up their enforcement of underage drinking laws this spring. In April, 52 convenience stores across town were checked for compliance with 96.2 percent of those businesses not selling to minors. Visit www.metrodrug.org for a complete listing of these responsible businesses.

This high rate of compliance would not be possible without commitment and collaboration in our community. We would like to thank local businesses and law enforcement for doing their part to help keep our young people safe and healthy.

Substance abusers sometimes suffer underlying mental illness – continued from page 5

other drugs, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Moreover, approximately 30 percent of youth housed in juvenile detention centers have substance abuse and mental health issues.

Generally, individuals display symptoms of mental health issues several years before the onset of substance abuse problems. In some cases, however, mental health issues may be induced by the stress of a drug-seeking lifestyle. The most common mental health diagnoses in co-occurring individuals include depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders and personality disorders.

Unfortunately, persons with co-occurring disorders often suffer more extreme lifestyle problems than those with one diagnosis alone. Overall, individuals with co-occurring diagnosis visit medical centers more frequently; experience difficulty interacting socially; are at greater risk for physical injury; and struggle to manage their emotions, behaviors and finances. NAMI estimates about half of homeless adults have co-occurring illnesses. Of those in jail with mental disorders, 72 percent are also dependent on alcohol or other drugs.

Constant cycling through the healthcare and criminal justice system is costly and ineffective. In order for a patient to recover more fully, the individual must be treated for all conditions concurrently. Because these conditions affect individuals similarly, treatment and recovery are both challenging and complex. A substance abuse disorder can intensify or mask a mental health disorder and vice versa. Often, one illness is treated while the other goes unnoticed.

Even if both illnesses are diagnosed, most substance abuse treatment facilities are ill equipped to provide comprehensive care for all issues. According to NAMI, "if both are recognized, the individual may bounce back and forth between services for mental illness and

Summer can be a risky time for teens – continued from page 1

parents," Pershing said. "Make sure you know who your teen is with and where they are going. Get to know their friends and their friends' parents. Regularly monitor the medications in your medicine cabinet and the alcohol in your refrigerator. And most importantly, keep the lines of communication between you and your child open at all times."

While full time working parents cannot always be physically present, they should regularly check in with their teen via text message or phone call. In addition, parents can always ask a neighbor to keep an eye out when their teen is home alone. If suspicions arise, parents can contact another parent and investigate further. A unified "team" of concerned parents can go a long way in preventing drug and alcohol use. Most importantly, parents should take time to spend with their teen this summer. The warm weather is prime time for families to spend time together outdoors.

"You are the greatest influence in your child's life," Pershing said. "In fact, two-thirds of teens cite their parents as one of the top reasons for avoiding drug and alcohol use. The fear of getting caught or disappointing their parents certainly factors into a teen's decision-making process. Let them know that you disapprove of substance use. Take the time to lay down rules and discuss the consequences before it becomes an issue."

If you suspect your child is struggling with drugs or alcohol, it is important to identify the symptoms early on to avoid further damages to their health. Signs of substance abuse include slurred speech; unclear thinking or poor memory; secretiveness; decrease in energy; unexplained disappearance of money; carelessness about personal appearance; disinterest in hobbies, sports or other activities; a new group of friends; irregular eating and sleeping patterns; significant mood changes and trouble concentrating.

For more information about what you can do to prevent substance abuse, log on to www.metrodrug.org.

those for substance abuse, or they may be refused treatment by each of them. Fragmented and uncoordinated services create a service gap for persons with co-occurring disorders." In Knoxville, both Helen Ross McNabb and Cherokee Health Systems offer integrated patient care.

Integrated care can dramatically improve patient outcomes when implemented properly. Effective integrated treatment includes multiple treatment professionals working together in one facility to provide both substance abuse and mental health treatment. While these treatments are complimentary to one another, they are implemented independently and intensively.

For more information, visit www.samhsa.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 The State of Tennessee