



Substance abuse increasing among the elderly

The abuse of alcohol and other drugs is often considered a problem affecting only the young population. Unfortunately, substance abuse has become a growing problem among the elderly as well.

The number one abused substance among seniors is alcohol, followed closely by prescription drugs. Alcohol can intensify the sedative effect of a prescription drug and put a person at great risk of overdose and death. It is important that seniors carefully monitor what prescriptions they are taking, and talk with their physician before consuming alcohol. As the human body gets older, it is unable to process alcohol as quickly, which leads to higher absorption rates. These higher absorption rates lead to higher blood alcohol levels and increased intoxication.

It is sometimes difficult to detect substance abuse in seniors because they often hide it well in fear of embarrassment or shame. Many feel they are too wise and should know better. However, of the number of elderly people who seek medical attention, 12 to 15 percent develop a substance abuse problem. Not following the instructions on a prescription, mixing or forgetting to take medications and not asking for assistance put seniors at high risk for substance abuse.

Signs of substance abuse include unexplained chronic pains, loss of coordination, changes in eating habits or trouble concentrating. Drug abuse occurs most frequently following a major life change. Retirement, death or separation from a family member, health concerns or reduced income are contributing factors that can lead to substance abuse.

For more information about prescription drug abuse or for prevention tips, visit www.metrodrug.org.

East Tennessee regional drug take-back event an overwhelming success – continued from page 1

from 10 AM – 2 PM in observance of the second National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. More information will be released as it becomes available. Medications can be dropped off anytime at the Knoxville Police Department’s Safety Building, located at 800 Howard Baker Jr. Avenue.

The East Tennessee Regional Medication Collection Coalition is a collaboration among prevention coalitions, local and state governments, police departments, sheriffs’ offices and utility companies to create safe, convenient opportunities for proper medicine disposal. For more information about the medication collection events or safe drug disposal, contact John Homa, Knoxville Solid Waste Public Manager, at (865) 215-2872 or visit www.medicationcollection.org.



We're turning 25!

Since 1986, the Metropolitan Drug Commission has worked to reduce youth use and adult abuse of alcohol and other drugs in Knoxville. From humble beginnings in the mid-1980s to a flourishing prevention agency today, the organization is proud to celebrate its 25th anniversary this year.

The organization has enjoyed much success over its long history. To commemorate these years of achievement, the organization will host a dinner at The Foundry on **Thursday, August 4** at 6:30 p.m.

More information will be available in the coming weeks. For questions about the anniversary dinner, contact Karen Pershing at (865) 588-0963.

Drug-Free Community Coalition to address new challenges this year

In its continued effort to combat substance abuse in Knoxville, the Metropolitan Drug Commission's Drug-Free Community Coalition has identified new areas of emphasis for 2011. The coalition hopes these new objectives will help address emerging substance abuse issues facing the community.

The coalition is comprised of three subcommittees charged with implementing prevention activities throughout the year. This year's subcommittees include: (1) Limiting Access to Alcohol and Prescription Drugs, (2) Increasing Access to Treatment and (3) Youth Outreach. Each committee has developed a multi-faceted strategy to affect change within the community:

Limiting Access to Alcohol and Prescription Drugs

With 65 percent of teen drinkers accessing alcohol within their own homes, the Limiting Access subcommittee is working to increase outreach education to parents about binge drinking. To combat the growing rate of substance abuse among the elderly, the committee is also targeting the older adult population to increase awareness of the problem and encourage proper disposal of old and expired medications. In addition, the group hopes to increase training opportunities for restaurant and convenience store employees on proper carding procedures.

Increasing Access to Treatment

To ensure substance abusers receive the help they need, the Increasing Access subcommittee will advocate for increased CEU hours for physicians to help them more readily identify drug-seeking behavior. In addition, the group will create a referral matrix to help individuals easily identify proper treatment programs. They also hope to develop a partnership with local pharmacies to apply warning labels to prescription bottles.

Youth Outreach

The Youth Outreach subcommittee (formerly the Alternative School Outreach subcommittee) has a new name this year to reflect its more inclusive approach. While the subcommittee will remain heavily involved with local alternative schools, the group hopes that its expanded focus will help them reach more youth in middle and high schools across Knox County. Members are also looking to target after school programs and other special groups to further broaden its influence. The group's first project is the implementation of two web-based curricula with the school system or after school programs: FBI's Safe Online Surfing program and MDC's Planet Rx Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention program.

Coalition membership is open to all interested residents in Knox County. Aspiring substance abuse prevention leaders can attend the next full coalition meeting on **Tuesday, May 24** at noon in the Knox

2011-2012 Youth Action Council applications now available



Youth Action Council (YAC) is now accepting applications for the 2011-2012 class. YAC serves as a representative organization for high school students, charged with ensuring that the opinions and concerns of youth are voiced, while also strengthening the sense of community among teens.

This project is designed to ensure that area teens have input in the policies that affect them and to increase public awareness about issues facing youth. Youth Action Council facilitates quality interaction with community leaders who serve as mentors and advisors to involved teens.

Applications and recommendation forms are available at www.metrodrug.org or by calling (865) 588-5550. All Knox County high school students (public, private and home schooled) are encouraged to apply. Applicants should be aware of key issues facing youth and possess the desire and creativity to make a change in their community.

For more information, email Sarah Harder at sharder@metrodrug.org.

County Health Department's Community Room. Lunch will be provided.

For more information about the Drug-Free Community Coalition or to join our efforts, email Sarah Harder at sharder@metrodrug.org.

The Metropolitan Drug Commission is excited to announce Lara Foy of The Solution Source and Webster Bailey of Cornerstone of Recovery as its 2011 coalition chair and co-chair. Congratulations Lara and Webster!



Survey results describe impact of Super Bowl alcohol advertising on youth, Youth Above The Influence works to reduce this negative influence locally

According to Drug-Free Action Alliance's 8th annual Big Bowl Vote (where middle and high school students around the nation vote on their favorite Super Bowl ads), Doritos overwhelmingly stole the show among those under 21 with their "Crash the Super Bowl" commercials. In Knoxville, the Metropolitan Drug Commission partnered with Holston Middle and West High School to participate in this year's study.

While Doritos ranked number one as the most memorable brand product among participating youth, the Anheuser-Bush brand (which included ads for Bud, Bud Light and Stella Artois) ranked as the second most "remembered" product.

Research indicates that the more youth are exposed to alcohol advertising, the more likely they are to start drinking or drink more if they are already consuming alcohol, according to the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth.

"While most teens did not choose alcohol ads as their favorite, these commercials still made an impression," Karen Pershing, executive director of the Metropolitan Drug Commission, said. "This is a great time for parents and educators to use these ads to start a conversation with their child about underage drinking and help them identify and reject seductive alcohol ads."

Parents and teachers can begin this dialogue by asking:

- What is this ad trying to sell you?
- Is this product healthy for you?
- How is this ad trying to get you to purchase their product?
- How do you feel about the product now?

In Knoxville, underage drinking rates have increased dramatically in the last two years with more than 36 percent of Knox County

students reporting alcohol use in the past month, according to the 2009 Knox County Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

In an effort to reduce underage drinking in Knoxville, Fulton High School's Youth Above The Influence (YATI) launched a campaign designed to help retailers decrease youth exposure to alcohol advertising, while increasing exposure to counter-alcohol, or "healthy," advertising.

YATI visited eight area businesses to ensure compliance with local regulations on alcohol advertising. The students provided each outlet with counter-alcohol materials, such as "No I.D., No Sale, No Way" buttons and decals to place on beer refrigerators and around the cash register. In addition, the students collected surveillance data comparing the number of counter-alcohol ads to the number pro-alcohol ads.

For Kendra Dailey, a sophomore at Fulton, the initiative made her aware of the lack of prevention messages in convenience stores. "It made me realize that there needs to be more counter-ads in the stores and not just ads trying to get the sale," Dailey said.

In late March, adult volunteers from the FBI's Knoxville division began working to extend the campaign's reach throughout the city. By May, all beer outlets within the city limits will be checked.

"With underage consumption on the rise, we hope these initiatives will help make our community a safe place for our kids," Pershing said.

For more information on underage drinking and Youth Above the Influence or for tips on how to talk about media literacy with your teen, visit at www.metrodrug.org.

Knox County students storm the capitol for the 2011 Legislative Day on the Hill

On February 23, thirty-six elementary, middle and high school students from Knox County convened with youth from across the state for the inaugural Tennessee PTA Student Legislative Day on the Hill in Nashville.

The day's agenda was packed with exciting and unique opportunities for youth to learn about state government. The students toured the capitol and state museum, discussed proposed legislation that directly impacts education and studied the legislative process of passing a bill into law.

Students also were given the chance to meet with representatives from their home districts. Representatives Steve Hall and Ryan Haynes and Senators Jamie Woodson and Stacey Campfield, all Republicans from Knoxville, visited with the students and answered questions about their experiences in state government.



"It was great getting to see some of the representatives from our state, especially the ones from right around our area," Liam Trainor, a junior at South Doyle High School and member of the Knoxville/Knox County Mayors' Youth Action Council, said. "The whole trip was eye-opening."



What is SBIRT, and why is it important?

SBIRT is an acronym that stands for Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment. It is a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to substance abuse comprised of three main components:

Screening- A series of questions or short questionnaire used by medical professionals to assess one's risk and/or extent of abuse

Brief Intervention- A non-judgmental conversation with the patient about their substance use, designed to educate and raise awareness about one's behavior in order to motivate behavior change

Referral to Treatment- An in-depth assessment of a patient's risk, including diagnosis and access to treatment options, if necessary

It is a public health approach that is highly touted in the substance abuse prevention and treatment fields today for its ability to deliver early intervention to substance abusers. This model not only helps identify high-risk users, but also those whose risk is moderate.

Early intervention can help reduce the high societal costs of substance abuse. More than \$500 billion is spent each year in law enforcement, violence, property damage, healthcare and other expenses associated with drug and alcohol use. SBIRT can help curtail some of these costs by interrupting the pattern of abuse. SBIRT procedures can be billed to health insurance companies, including Medicare and TennCare.

Prevention advocates hope to see this approach used more widely in the healthcare field. The Metropolitan Drug Commission is working with UT Medical Center to integrate this approach into doctors' daily routines.

"We hope SBIRT will become standard practice in our local medical facilities," Karen Pershing, executive director of the Metropolitan Drug Commission, said. "With prescription drug abuse and adolescent alcohol use increasing nationwide, it is more important than ever for healthcare professionals to quickly identify individuals with substance abuse disorders, as well as those exhibiting risk factors for substance abuse, and place them in an appropriate treatment program. The SBIRT model provides a simple, effective way to do that."

As a parting gift, Secretary of State Tre Hargett provided each student with the Tennessee Blue Book, a publication designed to enhance citizens' knowledge about Tennessee government and the history of their state.

The event was not without surprises. Newly-elected governor Bill Haslam and former UT head football coach Phillip Fulmer also stopped by for unexpected visits with the students.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Awareness Days

April 1-30: Alcohol Awareness Month

May 7: Mental Health Awareness Day

June 26: International Day Against Drug Abuse

Save The Date!

Join us for our Drug-Free Community Coalition



meeting on **Tuesday, May 24** 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.

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 <http://metrodrug.org/register.aspx>.

203 and counting!

Our social media following is growing slowly, but steadily!

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.

To donate, call (865) 588-5550 or email Holly Fuquay at bookkeeper@metrodrug.org. The Metropolitan Drug Commission is a 501c(3) organization. All contributions are tax-deductible.



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.

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Thank You!

We would like to personally thank everyone who attended the underage drinking policy meeting this March. We were thrilled to see such passion and commitment on the part of our state and local officials. Through this collaborative effort, we can help reduce the underage drinking rate in Knox County, contributing to a healthier, safer environment for our children. This meeting was the first big step towards a strong, sustainable partnership. We appreciate your service to the citizens of Knox County and willingness to participate in this effort.

Is it okay to allow teens to drink at home? – continued from page 1

enjoyable for both parents and teenagers:

- Talk with your child early and often about alcohol.
- Be clear that you disapprove of underage drinking. Don't leave room from interpretation.
- Reinforce that underage drinking is against the law.
- Communicate with your teenager about the agenda for the night. Make sure they are aware of curfews and other ground rules, as well as the consequences for violating those rules. Discuss these plans with other parents.
- Be a good role model. Demonstrate responsibility and lawfulness.

To address underage drinking this spring, the Metropolitan Drug Commission will be distributing prom cards to tuxedo, dress and flower shops in the Knoxville area. The cards are designed to discourage underage drinking and promote a fun and safe prom.

For tips on how to plan a safe and sober prom or graduation party, visit the "What You Can Do" tab at www.metrodrug.org.

Knox County students storm the capitol for the 2011 Legislative Day on the Hill – continued from page 5

"I think this was a great opportunity for the students of Knox County to become more civically engaged and learn about how Tennessee government works," Sarah Harder, project director at the Metropolitan Drug Commission, said. "I hope this trip made the youth more inclined to vote in local, state and federal elections as they approach adulthood."

The 2011 Tennessee PTA Student Legislative Day on the Hill was sponsored by the Knox County Council PTA, the Howard Baker Center and the Metropolitan Drug Commission.

DID YOU KNOW???

Hosting an underage drinking party is illegal, and the host parents can be held responsible for the negative consequences that may result. The Metropolitan Drug Commission wants to dispel some of the most common myths about social hosting and provide parents with the true facts about underage drinking:

MYTH: If my teen drinks at home, he or she will learn their tolerance level before they are placed in a high-pressure situation at a bar or party.

FACT: Research shows that teen drinkers are more likely to suffer nerve damage in their brains than those who abstain from alcohol. Brain development is still in progress through a young person's early to mid-20s. Even occasional, moderate amounts of alcohol can be detrimental to the developing adolescent brain. Furthermore, teens that drink before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence problems later in life, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

MYTH: Making alcohol easily accessible and available makes consumption less taboo, taking away some of its power and appeal. Besides, European teens are allowed to drink alcohol and exhibit few behavioral problems or side effects.

FACT: Those in favor of teens drinking within the home often point to the European model, where laws and social norms pertaining to alcohol are more liberal. However, research shows that European teens binge drink more frequently and have higher intoxication rates than American teens. Binge drinking (consuming five or more alcoholic beverages in one session) may contribute to alcohol dependency in adulthood.

MYTH: By allowing my teen to drink at home, they will be less likely to drink when they are unsupervised.

FACT: Parents often believe that allowing teens to drink at home is safer because they can control the amount of alcohol being consumed. 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. However, 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.

Alert

METROPOLITAN DRUG COMMISSION

strengthens families, protects lives.

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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