



May 3rd through 9th is National Teacher Appreciation Week!

Members of your Youth Leadership Group can thank the teachers at your school who are asset builders by sending them a free e-card brought to you by the Search Institute.

Go to their site, www.search-institute.org, for more info!

May 2009

3rd-9th Teacher Appreciation Week

7th National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

3^{1st} World No Tobacco Day

Prom Promise Month

Mental Health Month

National Teen Pregnancy

Make Prom 2009 One to Remember!

Prom is one of the highlights of high school for many students. From getting dressed up to riding in a limo and dancing and laughing with friends, prom is definitely an experience that students will remember forever. Hopefully. If students drink alcohol or use drugs before, during or after their big night they are putting themselves at increased risk for making bad decisions. Substance abuse can also effect memory, making prom something that a student could have no recollection of by the next day.

Each year, over 1,200 high school students are killed in alcohol-related car crashes during prom and graduation season. In order to fight this staggering statistic, the Youth Advisory Council at Valley Regional sponsors the *Valley Vow*. Each year there is an assembly the week before the prom, which also coincides with the community's High on Life Week. This year's assembly includes a mock car crash and a speaker from MADD. After the assembly all of the Valley students sign the *Valley Vow* which goes as follows:

I, _____, vow to protect family and friends, mine and yours. I promise to make safety a priority. I will not be one of the 1,200 American teens who will die needlessly during prom and graduation season. I refuse to become a statistic!

Signature



YAC members print the vow on colored paper, four to a page, and then cut them out. Once students fill in their name and sign the vow, the small sheets are taped together to form a paper chain that is displayed near the cafeteria as a daily reminder of the commitment to make healthy decisions. Students who sign the Valley Vow also receive a jelly bracelet as a reward for their dedication to the vow and to act as another reminder. The *Valley Vow* has become part of the culture at Valley Regional and students look forward to participating each year. Your Youth Leadership Group can start the same tradition at your school!

Special thanks to the VRHS/Tri-Town Youth Advisory Council for sharing their prom promise best practice with us!



MCSAAC

393 Main Street
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 347-5959
Fax: (860) 346-1043
www.mcsaac.org

If you would like to see a certain topic covered in an upcoming issue of **Notes & News**, please contact Kristin at kris@mcsaac.org

Dear Colleague...

Urge your senators to sign the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities *Dear Colleague* letter!

Connecticut's own Senator Dodd, along with Senator Grassley from Iowa, is circulating a letter among his colleagues to request that the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program receive \$346.5 million in funding for the 2010 fiscal year. This program provides funding to 97% of the nation's school districts for efforts in preventing substance abuse and violence at, and around, schools. Over 37 million youth are served by this grant each year - including you and your peers! The State Grants portion of the SDFSC program costs only \$1 per student per month, whereas truancy, violence and disciplinary programs cost the country \$41 billion per year. A reduction of those costs through level funding of the State Grants would not only help our economy, but would also contribute to continued and far-reaching academic and personal success for American students.

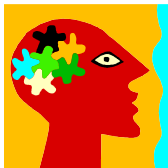
Contact Senators Dodd and Lieberman and tell them that your Youth Leadership Group supports the SDFSC program and all substance abuse prevention efforts. Members of Congress are more likely to support initiatives if they know they have the backing of their constituents. You can get your entire community involved by spreading the word about the importance of this grant!

To contact Senator Dodds and Lieberman:

- Call the US Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to their offices.
- Ask to speak to the legislative assistant who handles the SDFSC program. Make sure to identify yourself and your organization and tell the staffer that you support the SDFSC program because it is invaluable. Explain that effective substance abuse prevention is a critical component to ensuring academic success for America's youth.

Contact David Kurosky, in CADCA's Public Policy Department, at dkurosky@cadca.org if your Youth Leadership Group has questions or would like more information! To view the Dear Colleague letter, go to http://www.cadca.org/coalitionresources/pp-documents/misc/Senate_SDFSC_Letter.pdf.

Mental Health Month



Mental health is how people think, feel and act as they face life situations. These include reacting to stressful events, relating to others and making decisions. Mental health influences the way a person views themselves, their lives and the people in them.

Studies show that at least 1 in 5 adolescents have a mental health disorder. They are caused by biological factors (like genetics and chemical imbalances) and by environmental factors (such as exposure to violence, high levels of stress and poverty). It is important to get help for mental health issues right away, and to do that one must recognize warning signs which can include: sadness and hopelessness for no reason, feeling overly anxious or worried, losing interest in things that were once enjoyable, poor concentration, racing thoughts and substance abuse.

To get help, contact:

- ♦ A trusted adult (parent, teacher, clergy, guidance counselor)
- ♦ Wheeler Clinic (New Haven, Middletown) at 800-793-3588
- ♦ River Valley Services (Middletown, Old Saybrook) at 860-262-5200.
- ♦ For immediate mental health-related services call 2-1-1.

Looking ahead- June & August 2009

June

**15th - 21st Men's Health
Week**

National Safety Month

August

2nd National Kids Days

4th National Night Out