

DAET COALITION NEWSLETTER

A community resource to help prevent youth substance use in Ashland

Ashland's Kids Have...

Decisions at Every Turn

Prevent Youth Substance Use

SPRING 2016

A LETTER FROM THE COALITION

Daily, we talk and read about the social- emotional health of our children. In May 2015, as a representative of our School Committee, DAET Coalition volunteer, and parent of three children in our district, I participated in four events that emphasized youth social- emotional health – a DAET priority issue: "New Directions in Violence Prevention", a stirring conference offered by Curry College; a Decisions at Every Turn Coalition meeting; a powerful conversation with Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan, High School Principal Kelley St. Coeur, DAET DFC Project Director Amy Turncliff, and Chief Craig Davis and Officer Dave Muri of the Ashland Police Department; and a School Committee Meeting.

I was so impressed with the conference presenters and what I learned at "New Directions in Violence Prevention." The conference highlighted the message that whether it be during the school day, while our children are involved in clubs and activities, or while they are involved in after-school athletics, it is important to stay in contact with our children in a manner in which we can ensure that they are essentially okay. I encourage you to read our feature article "*What Parents Need to Know to Recognize Teen Dating Violence and to Help Promote Healthy Relationships*".

At the Coalition meeting there was a vibrant discussion of how DAET and the wider community can work to reduce the shame often associated with substance abuse and addiction. We need to strive towards eliminating the stigma attached to substance abuse and talk about the crisis of the many people who are struggling with addiction or an illness and reaching out for help.

District Attorney Marian Ryan and members of her staff attended a meeting hosted by AHS principal, Kelley St. Coeur, to offer their perspective on keeping our children safe and understanding the role that we play both as parents and educators to provide them with the tools they need to manage their world.

Lastly, during a School Committee member update to the Board, I shared my experiences and described how they tied into the work we do. Ashland Public Schools have been a leader in providing programs and support for the social and emotional needs of all of our children. It is imperative that we as a community continue to strive to provide access to the best education, and to foster the resilience, confidence, compassion, consideration, and modeling of good citizenship that allow our children to be strong, successful and able to interact with their world safely and securely. It is apparent that the Ashland Public School Administration has placed a priority on supporting the social- emotional health of all students throughout the district and views this as a pathway for prevention.

Gina Donovan

Ashland Parent, DAET Volunteer, Ashland School Committee Member

NATIONAL DRUG TAKE BACK DAY IS APRIL 26!

Take your expired/unused medication to the Ashland Police Station dropbox.

BECOMING A LEADER

NEHA SHABEER, AHS STUDENT, DAET YOUTH MEMBER



DAET Youth Members attend the CADCA Conference in February (L to R): Selma Chamime, Stephanie Moscaritolo, Haley Boccuzzi and Neha Shabeer

Positive changes in a town should come equally from the contributions of its youth and adults. I am glad Ashland High School has youth forums for community involvement and leadership opportunities that inspire kids to become leaders. I personally would like to consider myself a leader. It just didn't happen in an instant, though. I've been gradually working at it, but when I attended the National Youth Leadership Initiative (NYLI) at the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) Conference in Washington DC, a new window opened.

The purpose of NYLI is to empower youth and give them the opportunity to fight for a cause they believe in. Our cause is to fight against substance abuse in our town. Ashland has the Decisions at Every Turn (DAET) Coalition which currently holds a Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant to help create awareness among children and adults to prevent substance use. DAET graduated from the National Coalition Academy this year at CADCA for completing staff training and requirements to promote a successful drug-free community. DAET sent four high school students (Haley Boccuzzi, Selma Chamime, Stephanie Moscaritolo, and Neha Shabeer) along with the wonderful Coalition Coordinator, Jemima Valdouin, and STAND campaign organizer and parent, Betsy Emberley, to the CADCA Conference. Using the Coalition's resources, NYLI taught us a framework of evidenced-based community problem-solving processes researched and documented by the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre Workgroup to assess our community's weaknesses and how to fix them. At the youth meetings, there were young, fun speakers to rev up the group and interactive activities to make connections with other youth from across the country. It was interesting to see what they did in their towns, how substance abuse affected their lives differently, and of course—gain new Instagram followers!

This all culminated in Capitol Hill Day. CADCA makes appointments for youth to speak to state senators about what they're doing to promote healthy and safe towns in the hope of persuading officials that prevention matters.

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WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW TO RECOGNIZE TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND TO HELP PROMOTE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime. Teens often think some behaviors, like teasing and name calling, are a "normal" part of a relationship. However, these behaviors can become abusive and develop into more serious forms of violence.

What is dating violence?

Teen dating violence is defined as the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence within a dating relationship, including stalking. It can occur in person or electronically and might occur between a current or former dating partner. Teen dating violence may also be described as: Relationship abuse, Intimate partner violence, Relationship violence, or Dating abuse.

What are the consequences of dating violence?

As teens develop emotionally, they are heavily influenced by experiences in their relationships. Healthy relationship behaviors can have a positive effect on a teen's emotional development. Unhealthy, abusive, or violent relationships can have severe consequences and short- and long-term negative effects on a developing teen. Youth who experience dating violence are more likely to experience the following:

- Symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Engagement in unhealthy behaviors, such as tobacco, alcohol and other drug use
- Involvement in antisocial behaviors
- Thoughts about suicide
- An increased risk for victimization during college

Why does dating violence happen?

Communicating with your partner, managing uncomfortable emotions like anger and jealousy, and treating others with respect are a few ways to keep relationships healthy and nonviolent. Teens receive messages about how to behave in relationships from peers, adults in their lives, and the media. All too often these examples suggest that violence in a relationship is normal, but violence is never acceptable. The risks of having unhealthy relationships increase for teens who:

- Believe that dating violence is acceptable
- Are depressed, anxious, or have other symptoms of trauma
- Display aggression towards peers or display other aggressive behaviors
- Use alcohol, drugs or illegal substances
- Engage in early sexual activity and have multiple sexual partners
- Have a friend involved in dating violence
- Have conflicts with a partner
- Witness or experience violence in the home

What Parents Need Know

Adapted from: www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/dating_violence_info_for_parents.page

Knowing the early warning signs of abuse can help you identify whether your teen is in an unhealthy relationship. Signs may include

- Your teen's partner behaves in a way that is overly jealous or possessive, such as checking in on your daughter or son often
- You observe verbal abuse, such as name-calling or demeaning comments
- Your teen gives up things that are important, such as time with friends and family, activities or other interests
- Your teen has unexplained injuries
- Your teen's partner abuses other people or animals

Start the Conversation – Parent Tips & Starter Questions

Adapted from www.Breakthecycle.org

- Provide your teen with examples of healthy relationships, pointing out unhealthy behavior.
- Encourage open discussion. Listen. Give them a chance to speak. Avoid analyzing, interruptions, or lecturing.
- Do not push if your teen is not ready to talk. Try again another time.
- Be supportive & nonjudgmental so they know they can come to you for help if their relationship becomes unhealthy in the future.
- Reinforce that dating should be fun! Stress that violence is never acceptable.
- Ask your teen: Are any of your friends dating? What are their relationships like? What would you want in a relationship?
- Ask your teen: Have you witnessed dating violence at school or among friends? How does it make you feel? Were you scared?

Be supportive and understanding. Stress to your teen that you are on his or her side. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Let your teen know that the abuse is not his or her fault and that no one deserves to be abused. Make it clear that you don't blame your teen and that you respect his or her choices. Read and download [Love Is Not Abuse Parent's Handbook: How to Talk to Youth about Healthy Relationships](#) to talk with your teen about healthy dating relationships.

COALITION REWIND

January

- Co-hosted two Community Programs with the Friends of the Ashland Public Library: "Mindfulness Tools" and "So Much to Worry About: What is Causing Anxiety in Our Youth, Why We Should Be Concerned"
- Published *Community Discussion: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health – How to Support your Child through the School Years* in Ashland Directions
- Launched the Opioid Prevention Work Group
- Published the Winter 2016 DAET Coalition newsletter and the Teen Stress and Teen Sleep tip sheets
- Submitted the Drug Free Communities continuation application for 2016-2017
- Established new partnership with Ashland K-12 PTO
- Joined neighboring coalitions as part of the Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative (SAPC) grant to work in partnership on regional underage drinking prevention efforts
- Pilot tested Round 4 of STAND posters

February

- Co-hosted two Community Programs with the Friends of the Ashland Public Library: "Social Emotional Learning & Resilience Building" (in addition to student and faculty presentations) featuring Dr. Susan Rivers, and "Ready, Set, Go!" featuring Courtney Arsenault
- Published "Launch of Pilot Diversion Program in Ashland" and "Ashland Community Invited to Learn More about Social Emotional Learning & Resilience Building" in Ashland Directions
- Published "Five Ways to Connect with your Kids and Build Positive Relationships" in Ashland Town Pages
- Launched the Social Emotional Mental Health Work Group
- One staff member, one parent volunteer, and four AHS students attended the CACDA Leadership Forum in Washington D.C.
- Hung Round 4 of STAND posters

March

- Co-hosted one Community Program with the Friends of the Ashland Public Library: "Putting the Fun in Family Dinners" featuring Lisa Beaudin and The Family Dinner Project
- Published "*Volunteer Coalition Member Speaks of the Power of Community Collaboration to Address Violence Prevention and Youth Substance Use*" in Ashland Directions
- Published "*Becoming a Leader*" by Neha Shabeer, DAET youth member, in Ashland Town Pages
- Collaborated with the Ashland PTO and the Ashland Clocker Club on the Clocker Classic community basketball game
- Conducted STAND mini-training for spring athletic coaches

BECOMING A LEADER (CONT.)

The night before, individual states met in conference rooms to make a game plan of how to make the short time with Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Ed Markey count. Massachusetts town coalitions were split in cohorts and our cohort got a meeting with Senator Elizabeth Warren. The following day, we got dressed in our finest business clothing ready to march the hill to make a change. And then Mother Nature happened.



Senator Elizabeth Warren with Ashland's Decisions at Every Turn Coalition Youth members

We got dropped off by shuttle in the middle of Capitol Hill to walk to the office building when torrential downpour started. We ran through DC like we were being chased by wolves. Once we finally reached the Hart Senate building security line, my hair was soaked, my blazer was clinging to my arms, and my tights were see through. We all looked like we had just been through a car wash.

Like any resourceful Ashland Clocker would do, we promptly went to the bathroom to dry our clothes and hair with the hand dryer. After becoming slightly more presentable, we went up to Senator Warren's office. She shook all of our hands and was very kind and intelligent. We spoke to her about the Students Taking A Noble Direction (STAND) social norms campaign at Ashland High School that creates positive peer pressure by promoting the message that the majority of students make healthy choices. STAND puts up student-elected posters around school promoting the cause and encourages conversation among students about making healthy choices. Senator Warren asked us about our stance on marijuana legalization and left an open floor for discussion. It was an afternoon to remember.

At the end of the NYLI training, we did a bonding activity in which we made a large circle and had to cross it if the statement spoken described you. It started off with easy commands like, "Cross the circle if you are an only child" and progressed to "Cross the circle if you were ever shamed because of your physical appearance." It put everyone in a vulnerable state, but helped us find a sense of togetherness that we weren't the only one going through problems no matter our background and age. Later, we had a discussion about social and mental health that ended the conference perfectly.

The trip wasn't all about work, though! We went to Nando's, went on evening adventures in the resort, went on a Ferris wheel, and became best friends with a shoe shiner named Clinton. Overall, it was an experience I'll never forget. I would like to thank DAET for sponsoring this trip, Principal St. Coeur for being supportive, and all my teachers who helped me make up work. Thanks for helping me believe that prevention matters.