



# Prevention WORKS!

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, INC.

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## 2008 Legislative Event Slated for April 29th.

By Ezra Helfand

The 2008 Legislative Event will take place on Tuesday, April 29th at Crossroads Theater in New Brunswick.

This year's event is titled "Underage Drinking in Our Communities - A Focus on Solutions" and will feature the combined efforts of the Somerset Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency as well as NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc.



The event is sponsored by [centraljerseymoms.com](http://centraljerseymoms.com) in



partnership with The Home News Tribune and the Courier News newspapers and Rutgers' Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.

# RUTGERS

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

This is a **FREE** community event featuring a light dinner

reception, panel discussion, a question and answer session as well as door prizes. The public is encouraged to come and learn about the problem of youth alcohol abuse and creative solutions employed by area communities. A panel of experts will provide relevant information about this important and timely topic and how we can all work together for our youth.

For more information or to register, call us at 732-254-3344. You can also register on-line at <http://ncadd-middlesex.org/2008-legislative-event/>

## FEATURE ARTICLE

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### The Problem with Underage Drinking and How You Can Help!!



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**Dear Friends,**

Where are you going to be on April 29? I would hope many of you will join us at the Crossroads Theater in New Brunswick for our Annual Legislative Event. With the support of the Somerset Council, Home New Tribune, Courier News, Rutgers University and CentralJerseyMoms.com, it should be our best ever.

I encourage you to come not just because it will be a tremendous event. I encourage you to come because it is a tremendously important event. Underage drinking, particularly among those under eighteen, is a serious problem. The science is clear: the earlier youth begin to drink, the more likely they will experience an alcohol related disorder later in life, the more the alcohol affects the developing brain, the riskier decisions youth will make, and the more youth we will lose unnecessarily.

A serious problem ... absolutely. One that we can address if we so choose ... absolutely. Unfortunately, the collective societal will has long been missing. Apathy reigns. Somehow, though parents are legally responsible for their child's health, well-being, and, to a very large extent, their behavior, society has given parents a collective free pass regarding youth alcohol consumption. The community at large sanctions underage drinking.

For some reason, parents don't think there is anything that they can do about their child's decision to drink alcohol. This is in direct contradiction to consistent data from youth that demonstrates the single most important factor that youth take into consideration when choosing to drink or not is what they think their parents will think. Parents say that they talk to their kids about drinking and that their kids know they disapprove. Yet, most kids say their parents would not mind if they drank, know that they do drink, or supply the alcohol for them and their friends to drink.

It is long past time for the message to be made clear. There are concrete steps we can take to reduce underage drinking. Will we eliminate it? Of course not. Can we change the cultural norm that says that getting drunk is a right of passage for ever-decreasing ages? Without question, the answer is yes, we can and we must. Each of us has an important role to play. It's time to depose apathy and make a change. Join us on April 29, so we can get started together.



Steven G. Liga  
CEO/Executive Director

## **The Problem with Underage Drinking and How You Can Help**

By Jennifer Smith, MPH, CPS

Underage drinking is a serious public health issue, which is often minimized by the media, youth, and even parents. The problem is often dismissed with statements such as, “It’s just a beer,” or “At least he/she isn’t doing drugs.” The truth is alcohol is a drug—the drug of choice among children and adolescents. It is the number one drug problem among the nation’s youth.

Research shows that many adolescents start to drink at very young ages. In 2003, the average age of first use of alcohol was about 14, compared to about 17 and one half in 1965. In New Jersey, the average age of first use is 11 years old. Nearly half (48.1%) of Middlesex County middle school students have used alcohol sometime in their lifetime. Additionally, many underage drinkers obtain alcohol easily, usually from their parents, in their homes, or from other adults.

So how can we address this issue? In New Jersey, there are laws to prevent minors from purchasing alcohol and drinking in public and to prohibit adults from serving or permitting the consumption of alcohol by minors on property the adult owns or controls. However, state laws do not prohibit underage persons from consuming or possessing any alcoholic beverage in a private residence or upon any private property. Fortunately, a state law passed in 2000 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-1.2) permits municipalities in New Jersey to enact an ordinance making it unlawful for any underage person to possess or consume an alcoholic beverage on private property. Therefore, I encourage you to work with members in your community to pass this ordinance in your town. This ordinance would close a loophole and will hold underage youth

responsible for their actions--not just the individual hosting the party.

This ordinance is an effective tool to combat youth use of alcohol on private property while at the same time retaining common sense exceptions such as allowing a minor to consume an alcoholic beverage in connection with a religious observance, ceremony or rite, or with permission of their parent or guardian at a family function or celebration. Thus, the ordinance is designed to control underage drinking parties, not what is served at the dinner table.

Penalties could include a fine of \$250 for a first offense and \$350 for subsequent offenses. In addition, driving privileges may be suspended or postponed for six months. Hopefully, the knowledge that they could be fined or lose their driving privilege for 6 months will give teens an additional reason to resist peer pressure to drink. Since youth who drink on private property often leave by way of a motor vehicle, this ordinance is also an effective tool for combating drunk driving. Please keep in mind, underage drinking is a factor in nearly half of all teen car crashes and between 50 and 60 percent of youth suicides.

When kids drink, they drink solely to get drunk. This ordinance is not about punishment; the purpose of this ordinance is to protect the quality of life for our residents and to protect our youth from the dangers of binge drinking and underage use. So, please help keep our youth alive and thriving!

Currently, there are 12 towns in Middlesex County (and hundreds more across the state) that have passed these ordinances: NCADD has a childhood drinking coalition that is working towards getting all of the 25 municipalities in Middlesex to pass these ordinances. If you are interested in learning how you can help, please contact Jennifer Smith at 732-254-3344, ext. 17 or via email at [Jennifer@ncadd-middlesex.org](mailto:Jennifer@ncadd-middlesex.org).

## **World No Tobacco Day 2008 is May 31st**

By Jackie Randazzo, BS, REBEL Coordinator

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the world. It is the only legal consumer product that kills one third to one half of those who use it as intended by its manufacturers, with its victims dying on average 15 years prematurely.

Approximately 1.8 billion young people (aged 10-24) live in our world today, with more than 85% found in developing countries. Having survived the vulnerable childhood period, these young people are generally healthy.

However, as the tobacco industry intensifies its efforts to hook new, young and potentially life-long tobacco users, the health of a significant percentage of the world's youth is seriously threatened by their deadly products.

Nicotine is a highly addictive substance, and child and adolescent experimentation can easily lead to a lifetime of tobacco dependence.

### **The focus**

Globally, most people start smoking before the age of 18, and almost a quarter of these individuals begin using tobacco before the age of 10. The younger children are when they first try smoking, the more likely they are to become regular tobacco users and the less likely they are to quit.

It is clearly proven that exposure to direct and indirect pro-tobacco advertising, together with other marketing strategies used by the tobacco industry, leads to an increase in experimentation by young people and, in turn, to the very real risk of their becoming regular users of tobacco

products. The tobacco industry spends tens of millions of dollars worldwide every year to effectively market its products in as many ways as possible.

In response to this threat to young people, this year's World No Tobacco Day campaign focuses on the following main message:

*One of the most effective ways countries can protect young people from experimenting and becoming regular tobacco users is to ban all forms of direct and indirect tobacco advertising, including promotion of tobacco products and sponsorship, by the tobacco industry, of any events or activities.*

### **A call for action**

Implement efforts designed to bring about a total ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products reduces consumption.

### **Call to policy-makers:**

- Require by law a comprehensive ban on all forms of advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products. Be aware that voluntary policies do not work and are not an acceptable response to protecting the public, especially youth, from tobacco industry marketing tactics;
- Implement policies and programs that do not target youth in isolation. Interventions that target the population as a whole, such as banning all forms of tobacco advertising, raising tobacco taxes, and creating 100% smoke-free

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environments have the greatest success in reducing youth tobacco use.

### **Call to young people:**

- Let the policy-makers know what you think. Advocate for a total ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products in your country.
- Get involved in a campaign to educate your peers on how the tobacco industry uses advertising, promotion and sponsorship to persuade you to smoke or use other forms of tobacco. Let the industry know you won't be duped by its slick, expensive promotional efforts.

### **Call to Non-Governmental Organizations:**

- Advocate to policy-makers for a complete ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products in your country.
- Help organize youth groups so they can be part of the campaign and engage in the conception, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of tobacco control policies and programs to ban advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products.

### **Call to the public:**

- Call on policy-makers to ban advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products to protect young people.

*Information for this article was obtained from the World Health Organization. For more information please go to:*  
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/2008/en/index.html>

## **Alcohol and Drug Abuse Hurts Everyone in the Family**

Dependence on alcohol and drugs is our most serious national public health problem. It is prevalent among rich and poor, in all regions of the country, and all ethnic and social groups. Millions of Americans misuse or are dependent on alcohol or drugs. Most of them have families who suffer the consequences, often serious, of living with this illness. If there is alcohol or drug dependence in your family, remember you are not alone.

Most individuals who abuse alcohol or drugs have jobs and are productive members of society, creating a false hope in the family that "it's not that bad." The problem is that addiction tends to worsen over time, hurting both the addicted person and all the family members. It is especially damaging to young children and adolescents. People with this illness really may believe that they drink normally or that "everyone" takes drugs. These false beliefs are called denial; this denial is a part of the illness.

### **Self-Help Groups**

- Al-Anon Family Groups  
[www.al-anon.org](http://www.al-anon.org)
- Alateen  
[www.alateen.org](http://www.alateen.org)
- Alcoholics Anonymous  
[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)
- Adult Children of Alcoholics  
[www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)

*To recognize the serious problem of alcohol abuse, April is designated "Alcohol Awareness Month." Alcohol Awareness Month is an annual observance that encourages the public at large and local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues. Within this issue NCADD offers its readers information and resources. If you would like NCADD to help you with literature, videos or to make a presentation, just contact us at 732-254-3344 or [mail@ncadd-middlesex.org](mailto:mail@ncadd-middlesex.org)*

## Are You Web Saavy?

The Internet is a great resource for all of us and useful for learning or play. A person can:

- Have access to various forms of entertainment.
- Get to know other parts of the world, its peoples, and customs without leaving home
- Get “late breaking news” as it happens
- Complete high school, degree, and other courses on the Internet and never enter a classroom

The Internet also provides a new way to communicate that can help individuals and children who normally find it hard to form friendships. Unfortunately, the Internet also can be a threat to all of us, and especially to our children’s safety and well-being.

Did you know that teenagers and young adults spend an average of 16.7 hours online weekly—more than they do watching TV. The Internet is now a main source of information for what’s “cool” and current in their world. From music, fashion, entertainment, sports, homework, and instant communication with friends, the Internet is the most popular way among youth to “get connected.” With this much time devoted to online or Web access, it’s safer that parents have some idea of what their kids are doing when they are on the Internet. Online tools to keep children from checking out adult material may not be enough. Other activities on the Internet require direct adult supervision and constant awareness by caring adults to avoid possible harm coming to a child.

Some adults try to get children to meet them face to face, and engage them in unsafe acts that may cause lifelong trauma or even loss of life. Others believe strongly in drug use and everything associated with the drug culture and use the Web to draw young people into it.

So what can you do to help your child to use the Internet safely?

- Make rules and set limits for Internet use, and be firm with your child about keeping them.
- If possible, keep the computer in an area of the home where everyone can see it and it is used by the entire family. A child may be less likely to disobey the rules if he is likely to be caught.
- Know the Web sites your child is visiting and what they are about—are they for play, music, or homework?
- Is your child using chat rooms? This activity may not be a good idea, unless you know the topic and the people are who they say they are. Get involved yourself, and keep an eye on the discussion over time.
- Some popular online activity among youth may be illegal—like downloading music and movies. Make sure you are on top of the laws and that your child knows them, too.
- Make children aware of the dangers of giving personal information on the Internet—this shouldn’t be allowed, except with your specific approval. This means no last name, where you live (not even the city), and especially no phone number should ever be given out.
- Very young children should always have an adult or older sibling with them when using the computer.

*This article was developed based on information made available by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).*

#### References:

- Middle Schoolers, Letting Their Fingers Do the Talking, [Washingtonpost.com](http://Washingtonpost.com), May 14, 2003.
- Teens Now Spend More Time Online Than Watching TV: New Study Details Media Usage Patterns of First Internet Generation, [AdAge.com](http://AdAge.com), July 28, 2003,
- Connected to the Future: A Report on Children’s Internet Use from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, October 24, 2003

## Children Need Help Too!

Children in families experiencing alcohol or drug abuse need attention, guidance and support. They may be growing up in homes in which the problems are either denied or covered up.

These children need to have their experiences validated. They also need safe, reliable adults in whom to confide and who will support them, reassure them, and provide them with appropriate help for their age. They need to have fun and just be kids.

Families with alcohol and drug problems usually have high levels of stress and confusion. High stress family environments are a risk factor for early and dangerous substance use, as well as mental and physical health problems.

It is important to talk honestly with children about what is happening in the family and to help them express their concerns and feelings. Children need to trust the adults in their lives and to believe that they will support them.

Children living with alcohol or drug abuse in the family can benefit from participating in educational support groups in their school student assistance programs. Those age 11 and older can join Alateen groups, which meet in community settings and provide healthy connections with others coping with similar issues. Being associated with the activities of a faith community can also help.

For More information contact:

- NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc.  
732-254-3344
- SAMHSA's National Helpline  
1-800-662-HELP
- National Association for Children of Alcoholics  
[www.nacoa.org](http://www.nacoa.org)

## Jason Surks Memorial Prevention Resource Center

We have thousands of videos, brochures and other pieces of literature to choose from at our Resource Center. We'd like to highlight a few items that might be useful for you on the dangers of teens and alcohol.

### Videos

- ✦ **This Place**— This 15-minute video depicts today's generation of youth and alcohol issues, how this is different from 20 years ago and what communities across the country are doing about it.
- ✦ **Wasted Youth**— This short documentary style film uses statistics and real-life examples to discuss the effects of binge drinking.

### Pamphlets

- ✦ **Alcohol. Straight facts: serious dangers**— A handy brochure that outlines the basics of alcohol, how it works biologically and its short and long-term effects.
- ✦ **Binge Drinking. Drowning in alcohol**— A comprehensive guide into what binge drinking is; the dangers of binge drinking and the long-term health consequences and legal ramifications.

NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit community-based health organization serving Middlesex County. Our mission is to promote the health and well-being of individuals and communities of Middlesex County through the reduction or elimination of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use problems.

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### YES! I want to support the mission of NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc.

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Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and mail with your donation to: NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc., 152 Tices Lane, East Brunswick, NJ 08816.

You can also donate online on the NCADD website at [ncadd-middlesex.org/getting-involved/private-donations/](http://ncadd-middlesex.org/getting-involved/private-donations/)

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