

West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth

Office located at: Sebastopol Police Department

6850 Laguna Park Way, Sebastopol, CA 95472

Phone: (707) 829-4400 Fax (707) 829-0967

Fall 2009

Dear Parents:

The purpose of this letter is to share important information about an issue of concern for our students, our schools, and our community and invite you to take action. Teen alcohol use is a problem in West Sonoma County. In the recent *California Healthy Kids Survey*, west county teens report frequent high-risk consumption of alcohol.

Teen drinking leads to many serious problems including accidents, injuries and alcohol poisoning, learning and behavior problems, and problems with friends, school and work. Recent research indicates that teen drinking has a significant impact on brain development, and those who consume alcohol at a young age have a higher risk of becoming addicted to alcohol later in life.

The West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth is a group of west county parents, educators, law enforcement officers, health professionals, and other community members committed to reducing the problems associated with teen use of alcohol.

The West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth suggests you join a supportive network of other parents across the community in creating a healthy and safe environment for West Sonoma County youth, by discussing the issue of alcohol use with your teen, and signing the annual Parent/Community Pledge (attached and made available in hard copy at your youth's school).

More about *The West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth* and information that may be helpful in discussing the issue of alcohol use with your teen may be found on the back of this letter.

After signing the Parent Pledge, you may return the pledge to your student's school office or to Diane Davis, Coordinator of the West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth (contact information on back).

Sincerely,

Keller McDonald
Superintendent

"The central mission of the West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth is to create safe and healthy environments in which youth can thrive by preventing youth access to alcohol and other drugs."

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Guidelines for Hosting or Supervising Events

- ✓ *Make sure alcohol is not accessible to teens.*
- ✓ *Encourage "by invitation only" parties.*
- ✓ *Let guests who leave the party know that they may not return.*
- ✓ *Call the parents of any youth who appear to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.*
- ✓ *Help anyone who is under the influence to get home safely.*
- ✓ *Call the police if the party gets out of control.*
- ✓ *Tell your teens you signed the Parent / Community Pledge and what it means.*
- ✓ *Designate a responsible adult to supervise your teen when you are out of town or unavailable.*
- ✓ *When your teen is invited to a party, contact the adult in charge to verify*
 - *The location and hours of the party*
 - *That there will be adult supervision.*
 - *That no alcohol or other drugs will be served or allowed.*
- ✓ *When your teen gets home from a party, check in with him or her.*
- ✓ *Talk to other parents about hosting alcohol-free youth parties.*

The West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth is a group of concerned citizens and organizations that have come together to address the problems of youth substance abuse. With funding from the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Prevention and Planning, the Coalition is implementing research-proven approaches to change risky environments that encourage underage drinking. This way of working will bring many parts of our community together to strengthen existing policies to make Sebastopol and the West County environs a safer place for youth and the community at large.

If you have any questions about the pledge, or want to know more about *The West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth*, or if you are interested in joining the Coalition, please contact

Diane Davis, Environmental Prevention Coordinator

Sebastopol Police Department

6850 Laguna Park Way

Sebastopol, CA 95472

Phone: (707) 829-4400

Cell: (707) 508-6242

dianedavis3@gmail.com

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West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth is interested in developing a Parent Pledge Directory that would include the names (only) of parents who have signed the pledge. The purpose of the directory is to facilitate parent communication and to show your support for creating safe and healthy youth environments. Please indicate at the bottom of your signed pledge whether or not you would like to have your name printed in a directory.

Yes, I wish to join other community members in signing the 2009/2010 Parent/Community Pledge.

- I will not serve minors or allow youth under 21 to consume alcohol or use other drugs on my property.
- When hosting a youth party, I will be home, visible and aware of what the youth attending the party are doing.
- I will not allow teen parties or gatherings in my home when I am not there.
- I will share the information in this pledge with my child/children.

School Name: _____

Your Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ Yes, I would like and give permission to have my name printed in a Parent Pledge Directory.

___ No, I would not like my name printed in a Parent Pledge Directory.

Your signed Pledge will be kept with the *West County Coalition for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth* to gauge community support. You will not be contacted for fundraising and your email and phone number will not be given out.

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