

# The Solution



Charlotte Mecklenburg  
Drug Free Coalition  
1117 E. Morehead St.  
Suite 101  
Charlotte, NC 28204  
704-375-3784  
www.drugfreecharlotte.org

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## Message From the Chair

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Our Coalition is not a temperance movement but we are very concerned about underage drinking. I would like to point out a few facts about youth and alcohol consumption in Mecklenburg County. For many, the concept of underage drinking envisions the 18 year old consuming alcohol in defiance of the 21 year old age limit. While this is true for some, the reality is that when one thinks of underage drinkers it would be more accurate to think about the 13 year old girl or boy! Substance Abuse Prevention Services' Youth Drug Survey shows that the average age of first use of alcohol in Mecklenburg County is 12.6 years! The average age of starting to binge drink (five or more drinks in a couple of hours) is 14.2 years, and there is no difference between boys and girls.

What other facts about underage drinking should we be aware of? 22% of high school youth and 5% of middle school youth drank more than a sip of alcohol in the last 30 days and of these middle and high school youth, 38% binge drank. When you look at just the high school youth who drank more than a sip of alcohol in the last 30 days, 49% of them binge drank.

Where do youth get their alcohol? Of students who drank alcohol in the last 30 days, 12.4% did so at home with parents. The largest proportions (49.1%), however, drink their alcohol at a friend's house (24.1%) and at parties at friends' houses (25.0%). Another 4% drink at parties in their own homes and 3.4% drink at parties at strangers' houses. 10.5% drink at home alone. In addition, 41% of high school students have had alcohol at concerts or festival events. Why do they drink? The most common reason for drinking cited by both male and female students was to have a good time, followed by to experiment and to relax.

These are our own local facts. It is also a fact that those students in the Mecklenburg schools who drink alcohol have significantly poorer grades than those who do not drink. Drinkers are also more likely to have unexcused absences. Binge drinkers are also more likely to smoke cigarettes. We know, too, that as the ease of access to alcohol increases the number of youth who drink increases. On the other hand, youth who report that their parents have clear rules against drinking are less likely to drink and definitely less likely to binge drink. Therefore, whether parents are aware of it or not, their attitudes toward underage drinking are critical to whether their children drink or not. While some parents may believe that it is better for their children to drink at home with them than drink away from the home, the reality is that youth who drink at home have less inhibition about drinking outside of the home and do not restrict their alcohol consumption to the presence of their parents.

Youth consumption of alcohol is not a moral issue as much as it is a public health/safety issue. Keep in mind that the leading cause of death of teens between the ages of 15 and 24 is automobile accidents that are alcohol related. Nationally, 66% of 18-to-20 year olds who were heavy drinkers drove under the influence of alcohol in the past year. From a health perspective, we should be aware of the fact that teens drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than a youth who waits until he/she is 21. The youthful brain continues to develop until the age of 23. It only makes sense to keep their brains healthy so that each young person can reach his/her greatest potential. Alcohol consumption by youth is a problem in this county. That is a fact.



**Dr. Paul Friday**

*Join the Solution...*

# Alcohol Awareness Month

In recognition of Alcohol Awareness Month in April, the Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center is organizing a variety of community events. These events are a way to raise awareness of the consequences of alcohol use and educate the community on strategies to reduce alcohol abuse. The following list describes some of the activities scheduled for April. For more information visit [www.Anuvia.com](http://www.Anuvia.com)

## Johnson and Wales University highlights Alcohol Awareness Month

The Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center is partnering with Johnson and Wales to bring author Koren Zailckas to the campus on April 14<sup>th</sup> for a presentation and book signing with students. Ms. Zailckas is the author of *Smashed: Story of a Drunken Girlhood* which details her battle with underage and abusive drinking. Other activities on the campus include a media campaign, Resident Assistant training, book discussions, and movie nights.

## DWI Awareness Campaign: Operation Flag

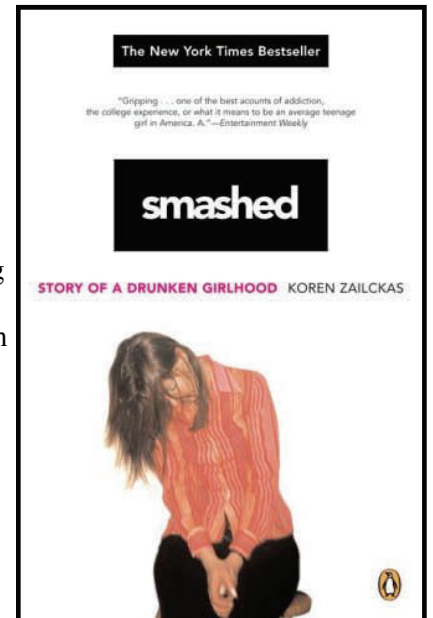
From July 2008 to June 2009, there were 5,463 DWI offenses in Mecklenburg County. To raise awareness regarding the problem of drinking and driving in our community, displays of banners and flags will be placed at the Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and the Mecklenburg County Health Department.

## Concentrated Enforcement

Mecklenburg County Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Law Enforcement will be providing concentrated enforcement during the month of April with a focus on areas surrounding higher education institutions. ABC Law Enforcement efforts will include additional DWI checkpoints, minor campaigns in off-premise establishments, and compliance inspections.

## Underage Drinking and Higher Education Institutions: A Town Hall Meeting

Safety and Security, Health, and Counseling representatives from local higher education institutions in Charlotte-Mecklenburg are coming together in late April to discuss current underage drinking strategies, best practices, and future opportunities.



Author Koren Zailckas will be at Johnson and Wales University on April 14<sup>th</sup> for a presentation on underage and abusive drinking and book signing.

## Alcohol Purchase Study Results



David Tujetsch District Manager of Harris Teeter (left), Rite Aid District Manager John McRoche (center), and Boardwalk Billy's owner Jeff Van Dyke (right), received Certificates of Commendation from the Coalition for not selling beer without proper identification during the most recent Alcohol Purchase Study.

Photo: Melanie Wilkinson

Over the past 4 years Dr. Paul Friday, Chairman of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition and a professor in the Criminal Justice Department at UNC Charlotte, has been carrying out alcohol purchase studies (APS). APS look at what percentage of local merchants will sell beer to youth who look under 21 (but are actually at least 21), without requiring appropriate identification. On January 14 Dr. Friday presented the results of his six alcohol purchase studies to the community.

According to Dr. Friday, the proportion of establishments selling alcohol without checking for identification has consistently decreased since April of 2007. Twenty-five percent of the merchants sold without requiring identification in the most recent study.

At least 50% of the purchase attempts were successful in zip codes 28202, 28214, 28211, and 28206. A "successful" attempt is one in which the merchant sold alcohol to the underage-looking youth without requiring identification.

Each establishment that was included in the study was re-visited by a member of the Coalition after the alcohol purchase attempt. If the establishment refused to sell without a proper ID it received a certificate of "no sale." All of the stores were provided with information about alcohol sale training for employees and stickers highlighting the need to check for identification.

"While it is not required by law that sellers of alcohol check for identification," Dr. Friday said, "we suggest that the checking of identification should be considered a 'best practice' for retailers to follow." Dr. Friday called for stronger legislation on the state or local level to require identification in retail sales. "Given the resource restraints on alcohol enforcement," Dr. Friday said, "the community would be well-served if identification was required."

# See what we've been up to!

## Spanish Language Town Hall Meeting

The Town Hall Meeting in Spanish, *Latino Children Growing in the United States*, took place on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010, at the Freedom Regional Library. Sixteen families joined the discussion. The event was organized by the Spanish Language Parent Centered Prevention Committee (PCP). The purpose of the event was to educate Latino parents and engage them in the prevention of substance abuse.

Prior to the event, the Spanish Language PCP Committee members met with some parents from the Freedom Drive area. The parents expressed an interest in learning about the risks their children are facing in their communities. The families also wanted to know how living in between two cultures was affecting their sons and daughters.

The Town Hall Meeting focused on the challenges Latino children are facing as they grow up in a multicultural world. The objective was to empower the parents and their children to embrace both cultures while they prevent substance abuse and other risky behaviors. A group of professionals was invited as panelists to share their knowledge on topics including child development, mental health, substance abuse prevention, treatment, and resources in the community.



Rachelle Lucero of the Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center with the Town Hall meeting's youngest participants.  
Photo: Steve Newman



Panelists in the front of the room, from left to right: Veronica Corral, Bilingual Outreach Coordinator from the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Zorana Valdes, Prevention Supervisor from the Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center. Angelica Castaneda-Noorbakhsh, Prevention Coordinator from the Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center. Mayra Rodriguez, Outreach Infection Control Assistant from the Mecklenburg County Health Department. Carlos Martinez, Consumer Advocate from Mecklenburg County Area Mental Health. Carolina Bonilla, Prevention Specialist from the Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center.

Photo: Ricardo Torres

The meeting lasted 2 hours and refreshments (contributed by Compare Foods) were available to the participants. Around 6:30pm, the panelists began sharing their information and during the last segment of the event, participants had a chance to ask questions of the presenters. The parents gained knowledge in a very vibrant setting. They unanimously agreed on the importance of having events like this one and collectively expressed wanting to participate in other events similar to this meeting. The Spanish Language Town Hall Meeting was a success!

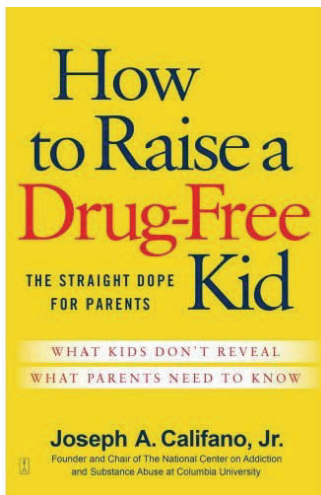
For more information on what parents and other adults can do to prevent kids from using alcohol and other drugs visit:

[www.drugfreecharlotte.org](http://www.drugfreecharlotte.org)

## What's your story?

Do you have any upcoming events or story ideas? Send your event information, pitch ideas, or share some pictures for the next edition of *The Solution*. Contact Kerry Burch at [kerry.burch@carolinashealthcare.org](mailto:kerry.burch@carolinashealthcare.org)

# Parents Key to Prevention



## How to Raise a Drug Free Kid: the Straight Dope for Parents

By Joseph Anthony Califano, Jr.

Fireside Books, A Division of Simon and Schuster, Inc, 2009, 320 pages

Reviewed by Sandy DuPuy

If there were a required reading list for parents, the Top 10 books would surely include *How to Raise a Drug Free Kid: the Straight Dope for Parents*. According to author Joseph A. Califano, Jr., twenty years of research at the *National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA)* confirms that parents are the first and strongest line of defense in protecting their children from poor choices that include the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs. That research also proves that nearly every child in America will be offered alcohol and other drugs before graduating high school – probably multiple times and possibly starting in elementary school.

The good news from Califano, who is founder and Chairman of CASA and former US Secretary of Health Education and Welfare, is that what he calls *Parent Power* - works. CASA research shows that children who reach age 21 without smoking, using illegal drugs, or abusing alcohol, are extremely unlikely to ever do so, and children who learn about drugs from their parents are much more likely to achieve those goals. In this engagingly written and practical book, the author presents parents with the tools they need to help their children grow up safe and drug free.

Califano knows that parents often struggle to exert their influence on the intimidating topic of alcohol and other drugs, and who can be surprised? American society sends frequent and contradictory messages about drug and alcohol use. He also acknowledges that most parents try hard to raise children who will have a happy and successful future. But he observes that ignoring the real power of those ever-present messages about alcohol and other drug use, as some parents do, makes children very vulnerable. And ignoring a child who is already using drugs and alcohol puts the child at great risk of continued use and adverse consequences. And what about those awkward questions that are sure to arise? Califano uses plain and direct language to urge parents to face drug and alcohol issues head on and honestly in a context that kids can understand. He wants parents to be the first source of information and guidance for their children instead of relying on others including teachers or leaving their children to turn to their friends.

*How to Raise a Drug Free Kid: the Straight Dope for Parents* prepares parents to give children “the will and the skills” to make healthy choices when an offer for drugs or alcohol inevitably comes their way. In the four sections, *Prevent It*, *Recognize It*, *Confront It* and the *Glossary*, parents learn how and when to talk confidently about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, to establish expectations about use, to spot signs of trouble and to know when to seek professional help. Section chapters address such topics as *What Drugs Are Likely to Tempt My Kid?*; *For Your Teen, Availability is the Mother of Use*; *In What Circumstances Is My Child At Increased Risk?*; *What You Should Know About the Differences Between Boys and Girls?*; *How Can I Protect My Kids at School?*; *How Can I Mitigate the Media’s Influence?* and *How Can I Prepare My Kids for College?*

Chapters are filled with real-life examples of approaches parents have used to support drug free kids at home, in their schools, in sports, in religious organizations and elsewhere. And those awkward questions? *Did you do drugs when you were young? You and Dad drink beer/wine/martinis, why can't I? You smoked pot when you were young, why can't I? How can marijuana be bad for me, it's a natural herb? I know lots of kids on the soccer/football/baseball team drink or smoke pot, what's the big deal?* Califano has those covered too, with enough information for honest and persuasive answers.

The last section of the book is the invaluable *Parent Power Glossary for Parents and Teens*. It details information about drugs teens are most likely to use including how they look, how they work, what symptoms they cause, and how dangerous they are.

Substance abuse expert Stanley Gitlow, MD, suggests that *How to Raise a Drug Free Kid* “should be handed to all couples when they take their new-born home from the hospital.” That timing may be a bit premature, but certainly if parents can only read one book about navigating the daunting waters of drug and alcohol use with their kids, this is the one.