

The Solution



Vol. 4 No. 3
January, February, March
2011

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Message From The Chair

It is hard for me to believe that we are beginning the second decade of the 21st Century. As with other milestones, it is an opportunity to reflect on some of the major changes, challenges and accomplishments of the Coalition.

For those who have not attended a Coalition meeting (every second Wednesday, from 8:30 to 10:00 at Anuvia) you should consider doing so. They are lively meetings generating real community, grass-roots responses to substance abuse. Our focus has been on two major initiatives, an Alcohol Initiative and an Illegal Drug Initiative. Each is data-driven with the goal to communicate our findings to the community.

Energy drinks have been a concern and focus of the Alcohol Initiative and we are pleased with the recent media attention on how dangerous the drinks are, especially to kids and when mixed with alcohol. They are a health hazard. Studies have linked excessive caffeine in children to elevated heart rates, hypertension, anxiety, headaches and interrupted sleep patterns. The stimulant effect of caffeine masks the depressant effects of alcohol and can lead individuals to carry out activities, like driving while impaired, as they are not aware of how drunk they really are. One fact of interest: elevated caffeine poses particular risks for those in warmer climates.

We continue to focus on underage drinking through very successful Town Hall meetings conducted in English and in Spanish and we have an active youth coalition, SPIDA. We have completed the latest alcohol purchase study at 150 randomly selected establishments to see if young looking college students can buy alcohol without being asked for identification. This fall, 20.8% of the stores sold without asking for ID. In 2006, 41.5% sold. This suggests that the Coalition activity is having an impact.

Our Illegal Drug Initiative and Policy Committee are working to develop the Coalition's official position on marijuana and the medical use of marijuana. This is a discussion we will be having in the months to come and we have posted some factsheets for review on our website: www.drugfreecharlotte.org. The Initiative is now developing a strategic plan to address the increased problem of black tar heroin that is causing deaths among our high school youth. Your perspectives and opinions are invited.

2011 will bring significant challenges. One comes from the 2010, Monitoring the Future (MTF) Survey, released December 14, 2010 by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The data show an increase in marijuana use rates among 8th, 10th and 12th graders. Particularly concerning is the fact that more youth report smoking marijuana on a daily basis, and that the perceived risk of regular marijuana use declined, suggesting that marijuana use among youth may continue its upward trend. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Youth Drug Survey has just been completed and the results will be released soon, but there is evidence that our data will not differ from the national data.

We have challenges ahead. Please join us in facing them.

Paul Friday, Ph. D.
Chairperson
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Join the Solution...

Students Preventing and Informing on Drug Abuse

Written by Rachele Lucero

Students Preventing and Informing on Drug Abuse (SPIDA) is a student-led group that seeks to educate and raise awareness about the harmful effects of substances and also works closely with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition. We work as community advocates for social change by supporting efforts to reduce the availability of drugs, improve the effectiveness of law enforcement and change social norms.

Youth Advocacy Training Presented by Youth Empowered Solutions!

SPIDA has a total of 60 members representing Vance High School and a newly established group at Myers Park High School. They began the year by attending youth advocacy training in Boone, North Carolina. The training addressed the “Talk It Up, Lock It Up” campaign and taught helpful public speaking tips for youth advocating against alcohol use. The training also taught students how to address the misconceptions parents may have about allowing their children to drink alcohol. Participants successfully presented role plays on how to encourage parents to lock up their alcohol in their homes and how to take an inventory of their alcohol. With the guidance from youth trainings and advisors, SPIDA used its advocacy and training skills at town hall meetings and community events to educate the community about drugs and alcohol.

Rising Star Speaks Out With Mayor Foxx’s Cause

Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx invited youth from all over Mecklenburg County to participate in focus groups to learn about the youth opportunities Charlotte has to offer. The discussion included what youth programs may need improvement, the biggest challenges about being a teenager, and an opportunity to describe the ideal youth program. Abria Addison, SPIDA member and recipient of the Substance Abuse Prevention Services’ Rising Star Award, actively participated in Mayor Foxx’s initiative. The focus groups were divided by ages and Abria represented SPIDA for the teenaged age-



Award Recipients. Left: Leslie Parks, Myers Park SPIDA Advisor and STAR Recognition Award recipient. Right: Abria Addison, SPIDA member and Rising STAR Award recipient.



SPIDA members from Myers Park and Vance High Schools. Back: DeJohn Eddy and Will Hawkins (Myers Park Advisor). Middle: Malia Brown, Autumn Chadwick, Thye Bordeaux, Rachel Young and Crystal Williamson. Front: Rachele Lucero (Vance Advisor) and Sabrina Adair (Myers Park Advisor).

group. Abria spoke on the importance of after-school programming and noted that “more consistent after-school programs are needed for teens to stay out of trouble, programs that help teens stand up for something positive much like SPIDA. Our mission is to educate students and our community on the dangers of drugs and alcohol.”

Mecklenburg County Department of Park and Recreation and Power 98

Tari Turner of Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation invited SPIDA to speak to youth on the negative realities of alcohol and marijuana. SPIDA members Autumn Chadwick, Ashleigh Curry, Thye Boredeaux, Kia Wright, Abria Addison and Teneara Spruill partnered with the radio station Power 98 and one of their favorite DJs No Limit Larry. Approximately 60-80 youth were in attendance.

SAAM Festival

SPIDA members performed a play for teens and their parents on how to avoid drugs and alcohol and understand how alcohol can affect the body. SPIDA members also encouraged parents to lock up their alcohol and to use an inventory to keep track of their alcohol at home. Footage can be seen at: www.facebook.com/Spida.

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

SPIDA, continued from Page 2

Day of the Dead

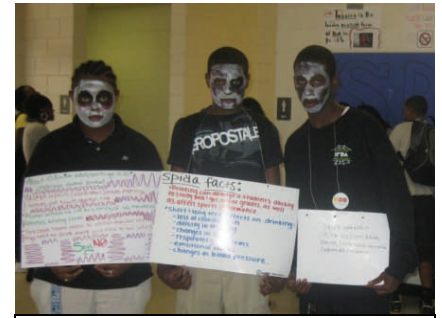
On October 28, 2010, SPIDA youth at Vance High School hosted a traditional Day of the Dead celebration. Members wore black and white makeup and signs that presented alcohol facts. Members encouraged approximately 500-600 students to sign a pledge to be drug free. The TRU group, headed by Sarah Moore of the Mecklenburg County Health Department, provided tobacco posters for the campaign showing statistics on the harmful effects of tobacco use.

Advocacy

SPIDA participated in advocacy efforts by writing letters to Mecklenburg County legislators regarding the issues of privatization of the sale of liquor, alcoholic energy drinks such as Four Loko, and the benefits of increasing alcohol taxes.

Looking Ahead

Upcoming SPIDA projects will have a primary focus on advocacy and outreach to the community on substance abuse. SPIDA is looking forward to partnering with TRU (Tobacco Reality Unfiltered) and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation to advocate for smoke-free parks. In January, Youth Empowered Solutions will be hosting a youth advocacy training in Charlotte. With this training, SPIDA hopes to engage other youth to speak out against the use of harmful substances. Finally, SPIDA will be preparing for the Teen Summit during Alcohol Awareness Month in April. At the Summit, students will share knowledge on the harmful effects of alcohol and educate youth on how they can support the mission of SPIDA throughout the community.



Day of the Dead at Vance High School.
Left to Right: Courtney Dawson, Tristen Johnson and Thyé Bordeaux.

Photos: Colonel Duane Orr

Substance Abuse Ranks 4th Among Health Priorities

Every four years Mecklenburg Healthy Carolinians and the Mecklenburg County Health Department must conduct a Community Health Assessment (CHA). While the Epidemiology Program at the Health Department is responsible for compiling and analyzing available health data, the assessment process relies on community members to evaluate and prioritize the selected health focus areas. The nine health focus areas for the 2010 CHA are as follows: 1) Access to Care, 2) Chronic Disease Prevention, 3) Healthy Environment, 4) Injury Prevention, 5) Maternal, Child & Infant Health, 6) Mental Health, 7) Responsible Sexual Behavior, 8) Substance Abuse Prevention, and 9) Violence Prevention.

The community prioritization process took place on October 27, 2010, at Trinity Presbyterian Church with 91 individuals participating in the priority setting exercise. Participants were given a brief presentation and provided with data summaries for each of the nine focus areas and they were asked to score each issue with regard to five criteria: 1) magnitude, 2) severity, 3) intervention effectiveness, 4) public concern, and 5) urgency.

Mecklenburg County Health Priorities


1. Chronic Disease & Disability Prevention
2. Access to Care
3. Healthy Environment
4. Substance Abuse Prevention
5. Violence Prevention
6. Injury Prevention
7. Mental Health
8. Responsible Sexual Behavior
9. Maternal and Child Health

In addition to the priority setting exercise, the Epidemiology Program developed a community health opinion survey. More than 2,000 Mecklenburg County residents completed this survey. One question presented a list of the nine health focus areas listed above and asked participants to select the four areas they thought needed the most attention.

Results from the health opinion survey were combined with those from the priority setting exercise to determine the Mecklenburg County health priorities for 2011-2014. After combining results, Substance Abuse Prevention ranked 4th among the nine health focus areas. The next step in the assessment process is to create community action plans for the top 4 health priorities. The action planning process will bring together community agencies and individuals to review the relevant Healthy People 2020 goals and develop or endorse plans that address our health priorities.

Mecklenburg Healthy Carolinians invites all substance abuse professionals and other interested individuals to participate in developing the community action plan for substance abuse prevention. For more information, contact Kerry Burch at kerry.burch@carolinashealthcare.org or at 704-432-4249. The full community health assessment report will be available online at www.MecklenburgHealthyCarolinians.org in January 2011.

Photo Gallery: Substance Abuse Awareness Month/Anuvia's Annual Luncheon



Left: Shelley Friedman (left) of the Drug Free Coalition discusses "Talk It Up, Lock It Up."

Right: Children participate in activities at the SAAM Family Festival in October.

Center: Judge Philip Howerton, recipient of the 2010 Jody Kellermann Award, and Mary Howerton, recipient of the 2010 Martha Bedell Alexander Award, each presented at the Anuvia luncheon.



Left: Skip and Jerry Mudge of Footprints Ministry talk with kids at the SAAM Family Festival.

Right: Steve Newman of the Mecklenburg County Health Department talks about the Reading Fathers Program.



Outside Photos: Leslie Dill, Center Photo: Shawn Overcash

California's Proposition 19 Goes Down to Defeat

California's Proposition 19, which would have legalized the personal possession of up to one ounce of marijuana for recreational use by adults in the state, was defeated on Election Day when 53.5% of California voters voted "no." Had the Proposition passed, California would have become the first state in the United States to legalize the recreational use of marijuana by adults. Such use by individuals under the age of 21 would have remained illegal had the proposition passed.

White House Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Gil Kerlikowske said in a statement after the vote, "Today, Californians recognized that legalizing marijuana will not make our citizens healthier, solve California's budget crisis, or reduce drug related violence in Mexico."

California voters aged 45-64 voted against Prop. 19 by 56% to 44% while 59% of voters aged 18 to 29 voted in favor of the Proposition.

Voters in Los Angeles County voted against the Proposition by 52% to 48%. Voters in San Francisco County voted in favor of Prop. 19 by 63.7% to 36.3%.

And jokes about the California vote quickly reached late night television. According to The Charlotte Observer, late night host Jimmy Kimmel, on the night of November 3rd, announced that, "Thousands of marijuana enthusiasts went to the polls this morning in California to support Prop. 19. Unfortunately the election was the day before." Supporters of the initiative have vowed to work to put the referendum back up for a vote in California in 2012. Support for a similar initiative has been reported in Colorado.