

A Call to Action—October 23-31, 2009

Red Ribbon Week is an opportunity for you and your organization to take a collective stand against the misuse of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

Consider doing any of the following:

Spread the word: Send an email, insert something in your upcoming mailing, and offer information at community events about Red Ribbon Week 2009.

Tap into valuable community networks: In addition to contacting local newspapers, consider an article to business, civic, and other groups that publish newsletters.

Take advantage of easily obtained publicity: Offer PSAs to local radio and television. Get your Red Ribbon Week event included in local community calendars and broadcasted on radio and TV stations.

Wear the red ribbon October 23-31: Ask your members, sponsors, and key contacts to help support Red Ribbon 2009 activities by simply wearing red ribbons and by distributing drug prevention information.

Use an event to attract attention: Organize an event and invite the media to cover it, or fold an existing event into a Red Ribbon Week activity.

Get a media sponsor: Ask a local radio or TV station, or newspaper to sponsor your Red Ribbon Week 2009 event.

Fact Sheet

Seeing the Connections—The Future of Our Youth Is in Your Hands

Alcohol and drug use by children and youth are associated with poor academic performance, impaired development, mental health issues, and many factors that affect the health and behavior of youth.

This fact sheet provides valuable data from the Nation's most reliable data sources (including the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and Monitoring the Future) that can help you assist local media in their coverage of substance abuse issues where you live.

Underage Drinking, Substance Abuse, and Academic Performance

- High school students who use alcohol or drugs frequently are up to five times more likely than other students to drop out of school.¹
- Students who drink alcohol during adolescence have a reduced ability to learn, compared with those youth who do not drink until adulthood.²
- Rates of past month use of most tobacco products were higher among persons with lower levels of education than among those with higher levels of education.³

Underage Drinking, Substance Abuse, and the Well-Being of Youth

- More than 40 percent of individuals who begin drinking before age 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some time in their lives.⁴
- Youths who were daily cigarette smokers were more likely to use other tobacco products, alcohol, and illegal drugs than current nonsmokers.⁵
- The rate of current illegal drug use (18.2 percent) among current smokers was significantly higher than the rate for this group the previous year (15.6 percent).⁶

Underage Drinking, Substance Abuse, and Mental Health

- Twenty-eight percent of suicides by children ages 9 to 15 could be attributed to alcohol.⁷
- Adolescents with serious emotional problems were significantly more likely to report cigarette smoking than were those with intermediate or low levels of emotional problems.⁸

□ The severity of emotional problems is significantly associated with increased likelihood of marijuana use among adolescents.⁹

1 The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Malignant Neglect: Substance Abuse and America's Schools. New York: Columbia University, 2001.

2 Swartzwelder, et al. Age-Dependent Inhibition.

3 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.

4 Grant, BE, Dawson, DA. Age at Onset of Alcohol Use and Association with DSM-IV Alcohol Abuse and Dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. J Subst Abuse 9: 103-110, 1997.

5 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.

6 Ibid.

7 Unpublished data extrapolated by National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism from State Trends in Alcohol Mortality, 1979-1992: U.S. Alcohol Epidemiologic Data Reference Manual, Volume 5. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1996.

8 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Relationship Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents.

9 Ibid.

Talking Points

Red Ribbon Week

□ In February 1985, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent Enrique Camarena was kidnapped, tortured, and killed by drug traffickers in Mexico, bringing drug-related tragedy to one more American family. His death prompted many school students to wear red ribbons in his memory. Since 1988, Red Ribbon Week has been observed to honor Agent Camarena's memory and families like his, and to unite Americans in support of a drug-free world.

□ During the week of October 23-31, millions of young people and adults will show their commitment to safe and healthy families and communities by wearing and displaying red ribbons.

□ This year's Red Ribbon Week observance is a reminder for youth to resist alcohol, drug, and tobacco use in their lives and communities. Preventing substance abuse works best when it is comprehensive—when youth receive clear and consistent messages from all the influences in their lives: family, neighborhood, school, and community. When parents, educators, law enforcement, faith organizations, and community members unite in opposing illicit drugs, young people are much less likely to engage in drug use.

Youth, Alcohol, and Drugs

□ Young people who use alcohol and drugs are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, experience school failure, or be seriously injured from driving or engaging in other risky behavior while impaired.

□ Youths who use alcohol or illegal drugs are more likely to be at risk for suicide.

□ Kids say that losing their parents' respect and pride is one of the main reasons they don't use alcohol and drugs.

How Parents and Other Caring Adults Can Help Keep Youth Drug Free

□ Talk to your child every day. The more you know about your child, the easier it will be to guide him or her toward more positive, skill-building activities and friendships. As a result, your child will be less likely to experiment with illegal substances. Practice active listening by paraphrasing what your child tells you.

□ Get involved in your child's life. Spend at least 15 minutes a day in an activity that your child would like to do. Play a game together. Do something special together once a week. Praise your child for activities you ordinarily take for granted, such as helping set the table for meals or doing homework without being told.

□ Make clear, consistent, enforceable rules for your children. If your child hears you say "no," it might be easier for that child to do the same when substances are offered to him or her.

□ “Walk the walk”—lead by example. If you want honesty, courage, discipline, and kindness from your children, you must show these qualities in your own life. “Two-thirds of kids say that losing their parents’ respect and pride is one of the main reasons they don’t smoke marijuana or use drugs.”

-National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

□ Teach your child how to resist peer pressure. Peers have a powerful influence on even the youngest children. In fact, youth say wanting to be accepted is a major influence regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Your child may make friends out of a need to fit in, overcome anxiety, or bolster his or her courage. As a parent, you can help your child by making it clear that you do not want him or her to use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

□ Keep track of your child’s activities. Get to know your child’s friends and their parents. Know where your child is going, whom he or she will be with, and what he or she is doing. Establishing relationships with your child’s friends will put you in closer touch with his or her daily life.

□ Contact the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center to request free publications designed to help parents connect with their children to discourage substance abuse. Call 1-866-242-4111 or visit www.drugfreeinfo.org for more information.

Red Ribbon Week and Beyond... Everyone Can Participate

Red Ribbon Week is an opportune time for families, communities, and educators to unite in their efforts to prevent underage drug and alcohol use. The greatest influence on young people’s decisions about drinking is the world they live in—including their families, friends, schools, the larger community, and society as a whole. The messages of Red Ribbon Week can be even more effective if supported all year long. The following ideas are just a few of the many that can be adapted for the week’s events or for year around promotion of healthy choices.

Businesses

Red Ribbon Week

- Paint store-front windows with red ribbons
- Purchase red ribbons and distribute to employees, customers, schools, etc.
- Display red ribbons, banners and posters on the interior and exterior of your building
- Place a red ribbon message in your advertisements and monthly statements
- Sponsor a Red Ribbon Campaign activity, such as a fun run, walk-a-thon, or alcohol and drug free picnic
- Promote the Red Ribbon Campaign in company newsletters, on grocery bags, marquees, or "For Sale" signs
- Advertise Red Ribbon discounts or sales for customers wearing a red ribbon

And Beyond...

- Offer ongoing education for employees on parenting and substance abuse issues
- Donate in-kind services to drug prevention organizations and community coalitions in need of specialized service
- Participate regularly in community coalition activities-designate an interested employee to serve on the coalition
- Allow employees one paid hour per week to serve as a mentor
- Sponsor substance free company events
- Have a clearly written and enforced drug-free workplace policy

Families

Red Ribbon Week

- Purchase or make red ribbons for family members and friends
- Display a red ribbon on your front door, mailbox, trees, and car to show your commitment to reducing the demand for drugs

And Beyond...

- Seek out credible educational resources and become informed about all drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.
- Talk with children about drugs on a regular basis
- Communicate a clear, no-use message to youth
- Plan drug-free family activities
- Practice ways to say NO to drugs
- Set a good example
- Do not involve children in alcohol or tobacco use by asking them to bring or serve these products to adults
- Use "teachable moments" to educate children about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Take time to really listen to children
- Have regular meals together as a family

Neighborhoods

Red Ribbon Week

- Plant red tulips along parkways and in community areas (with permission and appropriate permits)
- Contact local neighborhood associations with help in distributing red ribbons
- Host a neighborhood cook out
- Provide neighborhood children with red chalk for decorating sidewalks

And Beyond...

- Host monthly or quarterly neighborhood gatherings so neighbors get to know one another
- Sponsor neighborhood parades and activities for children. Demonstrate fun without alcohol

Religious Organizations

Red Ribbon Week

- Distribute red ribbons at services during Faith Weekend
- Announce the various Red Ribbon Campaign community activities in newsletters and bulletins
- Hold prayer vigils for individuals and families experiencing problems with substance abuse
- Invite youth to distribute red ribbons during Red Ribbon Faith Weekend

And Beyond...

- Pastors - learn as much as you can about alcohol and other drugs and their affects on the family and community
- Organize a mentoring initiative - mentor youth from the greater community
- Sponsor educational in-service programs for priests, ministers, rabbis, secretaries, volunteers, and the congregation on alcohol and other drugs
- Provide information about alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and parenting in your bulletin or newsletter
- Offer your building as a place for parent education classes
- Become involved with community anti-drug coalitions
- Assist fellowship groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Alanon, and Alateen
- Address alcohol, other drug, and related problems in sermons - this could open the door for those dealing with these problems to seek assistance
- Be knowledgeable about counseling, intervention, and treatment resources in the community - refer people as needed

Schools/Universities

Red Ribbon Week

- Assign a research project on the history of Red Ribbon week
- Designate a Red Ribbon coordinator and committee of students and staff
- Plan essay contests, poster contests, and journalism competitions
- Purchase red ribbons and distribute to students and staff
- Decorate the school in red
- "Plant the Promise." Plant red tulip bulbs at your school or other civic site as a symbol for a Drug-Free America.
- Feature drug information in school publications

And Beyond...

- Incorporate alcohol and other drug education into staff in-services
- Integrate alcohol, tobacco, other drug education, and resistance skills into regular curriculum
- Know the treatment and counseling resources in your community and how to refer families to them
- Begin Student Assistance and Building Assistance teams to help deal with issues that affect student and staff performance
- Have clear and fairly and consistently enforced drug-free (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) policies for students, staff, and others using the facilities. Include all property owned by the school (e.g., parking lots, stadiums, etc.) Involve students in writing and/or updating the policies
- Incorporate drug education into student and/or parent orientation sessions
- Have clearly written and enforced no-use policies
- If the school provides student housing, make some of the housing alcohol and tobacco free
- Feature alcohol, tobacco, and drug information in school publications
- Do not allow tobacco or alcohol companies to sponsor or underwrite student events
- Have students do reports or presentations on alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and related issues (e.g., violence, costs to society, etc.)

Service Clubs

Red Ribbon Week

- Get involved with Red Ribbon committees in your community
- Adopt a school and donate red ribbons to the students and staff
- Underwrite costs of Red Ribbon supplies for low income children

And Beyond...

- Work with local organizations to provide parenting sessions during regular meetings
- Invite a local prevention or treatment professional to speak to your group about drug issues
- Encourage members to be involved in mentoring
- Actively participate in local anti-drug coalitions
- Support drug prevention activities in the community with volunteer time or financial donations
- Be an advocate for and support substance abuse prevention, treatment, and aftercare services

Government Agencies

Red Ribbon Week

- Get involved in the Red Ribbon committee in your community
- Include Red Ribbon message or ribbons in employee paychecks
- Hold a Red Ribbon celebration for employees and their families
- Give different departments red ribbons and see how creative they can be in decorating their area
- Participate in the daily Red Ribbon theme days

And Beyond...

- Support and become actively involved in community anti-drug coalitions
- Learn about the financial and social impact that alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and related issue have on a community - share this information with others in the community
- Be aware of zoning laws and the placement of alcohol and tobacco outlets, and advertising
- Assess community ordinances to see if they inadvertently contribute to increased use of alcohol and other drugs
- Be a positive role model to youth and adults in the community
- Have clearly written and enforced drug-free workplace policies

Youth Organizations

Red Ribbon Week

- Purchase and sell red ribbons to raise funds for your group
- Plan special activities for youth and families during the Red Ribbon Campaign- such as a health fair, fun run, drug education program

- Volunteer to help plan community Red Ribbon events
- Distribute red ribbons to all houses in your neighborhood

And Beyond...

- Volunteer to help plan community anti-drug events
- Hold education programs for parents. Include information on alcohol and other drugs, and the role they play in helping kids stay drug-free

- Organize ongoing groups, among members, to promote alcohol, tobacco, and other drug-free lifestyles
- Begin regular drug education programs
- Create clear guidelines about parental behavior during youth events. Do not allow adults to bully youth or volunteers. Hold parents accountable to be appropriate role models
- Have youth research and present to each other information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Have youth commit to a "no use contract", make sure they understand the consequences for breaking the contract and hold them accountable for their choice. Have the student's parents sign the contract also
- Purchase and sell red ribbons to raise funds for your group

Public Safety Agencies

Red Ribbon Week

- Purchase red ribbons and wear on uniforms
- Display red ribbons in a prominent place on all vehicles
- Help plan and participate in the Red Ribbon Campaign activities
- Offer to speak at community programs
- Help decorate light poles and buildings with red ribbons
- Initiate a drug education program for employees

And Beyond...

- Learn about the signs and symptoms of alcohol and other drug use and how they impact your job and the safety of the public
- Know about safety precautions needed when dealing with a methamphetamine lab. Educate the public about the risks associated with methamphetamine production and what to do if they suspect a lab in their neighborhood
- Know about counseling and treatment resources in your community
- Participate regularly in community anti-drug coalitions
- Have a clearly written and enforced drug-free workplace policy
- Offer drug education and parenting programs for employees
- Set a good example for youth in the community

Health Care Professionals

Red Ribbon Week

- Purchase red ribbons for employees and patients
- Display red ribbons on the interior and exterior of buildings, clinics, and hospitals
- Initiate a drug education program for your staff and the community
- Distribute educational literature alerting others to the dangers of drug use
- Promote healthy, drug-free life styles

And Beyond...

- Learn about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and their effects on the body and brain
- Educate patients on how the use/abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs affects their health
- Learn as much as possible about addiction and its long-term effects
- Ask patients about all medications being taken. Their symptoms could be a sign of harmful drug interactions
- Be familiar with treatment and counseling resources in the community - refer patients as needed

- Have educational literature about alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and related issues (e.g., violence, eating disorders, HIV/AIDS) in waiting areas and exam rooms
- Before prescribing medications, talk with patients about their drug use history. If they are in recovery, do not prescribe anything that has a potential for abuse or addiction (e.g., painkillers, sedatives)
- Recognize that health care professionals are at high risk for drug abuse in part due to their access to addictive medication. Provide ongoing education for staff on alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and addiction
- Participate in or host drug education events for the community