



For Immediate Release

Monday, June 23, 2014

Contact: Mary Conway
mary@syvphp.org
686-0295

DRUG DANGERS LURK FOR TEENS DURING SUMMER VACATION Valley Youth Coalition Advises Parents to be Aware

The good news for teens is that school has ended for this year and they will be enjoying the freedom from homework and the daily routine of attending classes. The bad news is that more free time often brings additional opportunities to abuse alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, including prescription drugs.

“Parents need to be even more vigilant during the summer in order to protect their teens from experimentation with these substances that we know are harmful to their developing brains”, said Mary Conway, Santa Ynez Valley Youth Coalition (Coalition) Director. “There are numerous studies that indicate that experimentation with alcohol and other drugs in adolescent and teen years, can lead more rapidly to addiction at an earlier age and that the addiction is more difficult to treat. It just makes sense to prevent youth substance abuse rather than trying to intervene once they are already addicted and the damage has been done,” Conway added.

In a national survey of teens 12 and older, researchers noted that the participants reported that the largest increase in first time use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and non-prescribed prescriptions occurred during the months of June and July.

“It’s not an accident that these ‘first time use’ data indicate that the summer months are the riskiest. Unstructured or unsupervised time can produce negative outcomes for teens”, cautioned Conway. However on the brighter side, parents can still have a positive influence on the choices their teens make. A recent survey of local teens conducted by the Coalition demonstrates that the number one reason teens chose NOT to abuse alcohol and other drugs is because of the influence of their family.

According to Conway, in order to be proactive, parents should reemphasize with their teen the family’s values and expectations about not using alcohol or other drugs. Parents can help their teen identify meaningful activities for the summer and can frequently check-in during the day so that they know where they are and who they are with. It is also helpful if parents talk with one another to share their knowledge and support for each other. At home parents must be observant of changes in behavior or health. Notice if alcohol, prescription drugs, money or other items are missing. And, respect your intuition. You know your child better than anyone else so if you have a concern, talk with your teen and don’t be afraid to seek help.

The SYV Youth Coalition is a program of People Helping People focusing on preventing and reducing underage substance abuse in the Santa Ynez Valley. For more information about underage substance abuse or the Coalition, you can call Mary Conway at 686-0295 or e-mail her at Mary@syvphp.org. You can also visit the Coalition's web site at www.syyouthcoalition.org and visit the Coalition's Facebook page.