



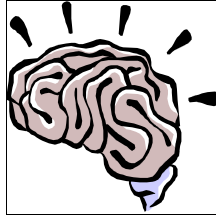
# Family Newsletter

Vol. 9, No 1, Fall 2006

Sponsored by Weston High School PTO, Weston Middle School PTO and Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program of Weston, Inc.

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## The Teenage Brain and Alcohol: A Very Dangerous Mix

What was once a social and moral debate may soon become a neurobiological one.

"There is no doubt about it now: there are long-term cognitive consequences to excessive drinking of alcohol in adolescence," according to Dr. Aaron White, research professor at Duke University and co-author of a recent study of extreme drinking on college campuses.

Dr. White found that alcohol causes more damage to the developing brains of teenagers than was recently thought, injuring them significantly more than it does to adults.

"The brain is developing during adolescence, and whenever a brain is developing, it's vulnerable to the disruptive effects of alcohol. Pregnant women don't drink for that reason."

Alcohol creates disruption in parts of the brain essential for self-control, motivation and goal setting and can compound existing genetic and psychological vulnerabilities. Early drinking is affecting a sensitive brain in a way that promotes the progression to addiction.

The most alarming evidence of physical damage comes from experiments on the brains of adolescent rats subjected to binge doses of alcohol. These studies found significant cellular damage to the forebrain and the hippocampus.

The study also suggests that "blackouts" in the adolescent binge drinker are a serious matter. Blackouts are usually brief and once they are over, the capacity to form new memories returns. But younger rats subjected to binge drinking displayed subtler long-term problems in learning and memory, even after they were allowed to grow up and "dry out."

## Youth Voices

*We asked the Youth Leadership Council,  
"What addictive behavior do you see in the high school?"*

"Just drive up early in the morning and you can find a bunch of teenagers huddled together in a car smoking what may be cigarettes or other drugs.

There are kids who bring "water" to school, but instead fill the bottles with vodka or gin.

Then there are the kids who suffer with eating disorders. I've seen some kids repeatedly never eat anything for lunch, except maybe one French fry. I've also heard sounds of vomiting coming from the bathroom, which leads me to believe that there's not only anorexia present, but also bulimia in the Weston schools." *-9<sup>th</sup> grader*

"Sadly... I feel I can list what I see and hear in order with a fair amount of accuracy: 1. Drinking (the most common), 2. Eating disorders (mostly anorexia, but a little bulimia), 3. Smoking (pot and some cigarettes), 4. Cutting, 5. Other tobacco products, 6. Other drugs (cocaine, heroin, meth, etc.))" *-10<sup>th</sup> grader*

"Obviously, there are a lot of high schoolers who drink and/or do drugs on a regular basis, but I do not think that there are many kids who could be considered addicted. There are however, an overwhelming amount of students with eating disorders." *-11<sup>th</sup> grader*

## Where to Get Help



Since 1973, *Positive Directions - The Center for Prevention & Recovery*, has been

helping individuals, families and communities in the Fairfield County area. They provide treatment, counseling, education support and intervention services for individuals and families seeking treatment for alcoholism, drug abuse & addiction, problem gambling and other addictive behaviors.

For adolescents, they offer *Youth Evaluation Services*, with counseling, referrals and support to adolescents and their families. PD also provides prevention programs that promote positive parenting and the prevention of risky behavior among young adults.

Positive Directions is a state licensed outpatient treatment center, and is an independent, non-profit and non-sectarian agency. Client confidentiality is guaranteed and no one seeking help is turned away for lack of funds.

They are located at 420 Post Road West in Westport and can be reached at 227-7644. More information is on their website, [www.positivedirections.com](http://www.positivedirections.com).



The Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program of Weston  
 P.O. Box 1241, Weston, CT 06883  
 www.weston-ct.com

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Nov 18 — Evergreen Ball  
 Jan 10— ADAP meeting  
 Mar 3, 2007 - Mountain Laurel Dance

Visit our website for more information and tips for teens and parents and many valuable links at: [www.geocities.com/adapinc](http://www.geocities.com/adapinc)  
 Editors: Susan Earle and Linda Nash—The ADAP newsletter is published three time a year.

**New Underage Drinking Law Takes Effect**



State law has historically prohibited minors from possessing alcohol on public property but did not address drinking on private property. Many Connecticut towns chose to pass their own town ordinances to close this loophole. Effective October 1,

2006, the state of CT took care of that loophole with House Bill 5211/ Public Act 06-112, which makes it illegal for the person responsible for the private property (adults if they are home or the person hosting a party if adults are not home) to provide alcohol to minors or to not make a reasonable effort to stop minors from possessing alcohol.

The penalty for a first offense is an infraction and subsequent offenses may be fined up to \$500 or one year in prison. Minors found drinking on private property will be charged an infraction on the first offense and fined \$200-\$500 on subsequent offenses. Connecticut joins more than 20 states that prohibit the hosting of underage drinking parties and 44 states that limit underage drinking on private property.

The law does not apply to minors drinking at home with their families. It also does not allow police to randomly enter homes without establishment of probable cause that young people are drinking inside.

**Parent to Parent Tips**

If you see one water bottle being passed around, there's a good chance it contains vodka.

**How YOU can Prepare for the Evergreen Ball**

With the Evergreen Ball on November 18, take this opportunity to discuss expectations and set limits. ADAP encourages parents to be aware of their child's plans before and after the dance.

Parties, especially post parties, are a concern for many parents. The Evergreen Ball itself is well supervised, but the party atmosphere often continues after the dance. ADAP encourages parents to be aware of their child's plans and jointly agree on a reasonable curfew. Very often, freshman parents do not allow their child to attend post dance parties.

If they do attend a party, make it easy for them to leave if they sense trouble. Tell them they can call you for a ride – no matter how late, no questions asked. Develop a code word that means, "pick me up now" to avoid being embarrassed in front of friends.

Most importantly, be clear. Tell your kids that you feel alcohol and drug use is unacceptable. Many parents never state this simple fact. It makes a difference.



**Keep Those ADAP Red Cards**

ADAP Emergency Cards, distributed to high school students, gave them discounts in the Center during Red Ribbon Week.

**SAVE THESE CARDS.**

They contain key hotline and emergency phone numbers.

**Enclosed is my tax deductible donation, payable to ADAP, in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

*Please mail this form along with your check to: ADAP, PO Box 1241, Weston, CT 06883*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_