



# Next Steps: Reducing Substance Abuse in our Community

Cabell County Substance Abuse Prevention Partnership

October 2008

## The Drinking Age Debate

The National Minimum Drinking Age Act was passed by Congress in 1984. This act required that all states increase their minimum drinking age to 21 or risk the loss of Federal Highway Funds. Recently the debate over the minimum drinking age has been reopened. In June 2008 the Amethyst Initiative was created, which supports a lowered drinking age, and has been signed by over 130 University presidents and chancellors throughout the U.S.

Locally, Marshall University's political science fraternity hosted a debate on October 7th regarding the legal drinking age. This debate was argued by Robert Heath, president of Alpha Sigma Alpha, and Aaron McVey, executive editor of The Parthenon, who were in favor of lowering the drinking age, while Amy Saunders, coordinator of student health and education programs at Marshall, and Stephanie Southall, the underage drinking prevention specialist at the West Virginia Prevention Center, argued in favor of the current drinking age.

Although, Marshall President Stephen Kopp has not announced which side he is leaning toward, he has stated in a response to the Parthenon that he sees no evidence that lowering the drinking age would lead to a decrease in binge drinking.

Below are some views which are both in support of the current drinking age and oppose it...

<b>In favor of the current drinking age:</b>	<b>In favor of a lower drinking age:</b>
Approximately 16,409 lives have been saved since the Minimum Drinking Age was passed in 1984.	As stated by the Amethyst Initiative, "A culture of dangerous, clandestine 'binge-drinking'—often conducted off-campus—has developed."
Within the last year, about 2/3 of 18-20 year olds who drank heavily drove while under the influence of alcohol.	By utilizing fake IDs, young adults make ethical compromises that erode their respect for laws.
College students that began drinking at a young age were more likely to report alcohol-related problems, according to a New York study.	Responsible drinking should be taught under mature supervision and a system of gradual access to alcoholic beverages by 19- and 20-year olds should be created.
18-year olds are highly influential in the lives of students ages 15-17 and will encourage, through their actions, their younger peers to begin drinking as well.	Those within the age group of 18-22 thoroughly intermingle. Yet in most social setting those who are 21 may imbibe in any alcoholic beverage in unlimited quantities as long as they do not drive or appear drunk, while those who are only 20 years of age must stick with soft drinks or become lawbreakers.

Drinking age debate continued on page 3...

## Teen Brains May Get Hooked More Easily to OxyContin



Adolescents are more likely to become addicted to OxyContin (generic name: oxycodone), an opioid that is widely prescribed as a painkiller.

According to the authors of the study, which was published in the journal *Neuropsychopharmacology*, this may be caused by the adolescents' heightened

sensitivity to the "high" induced by the drug.

However, according to Anna Ratka, chair and professor of pharmaceutical sciences at the Texas A&M, "it's a proven research fact that people who use opioids, which are the most effective pain-relieving medication, on a regular basis do not get addicted and do not abuse them." She noted that people who are suffering from pain are not sensitive to the drug's high. However, the bodies of young, healthy people respond differently to the drug than the bodies of

those who are in pain.

The abuse of prescription Oxycontin has become a major public health concern as the trend for prescription drug abuse among young adults continues to rise.

Addiction frequently begins during adolescence and early adulthood, when the body and more specifically, the central nervous system, are still evolving.

Reprinted from Washington Post [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

## Red Ribbon Week: October 23-31, 2008

Red Ribbon Week first began in 1985 after the kidnapping and murder of Drug Enforcement Agent Enrique Camarena. Agent Camarena had been working undercover in Guadalajara, Mexico for several years when he discovered a multimillion dollar narcotics manufacturing operation in Chihuahua, Mexico. Following the closure of the manufacturing operation, the drug cartels involved sought revenge and subsequently murdered key informants, including Agent Camarena and his pilot, Captain Alfredo Zavala-Avelar.

Following the death of Agent Camarena, national media throughout the US focused on

the world of drug trafficking in America. Citizens from Agent Camarena's hometown became a voice to demand the decrease of illegal drug use in the US and wore red ribbons in support.

In 1988 Red Ribbon week was recognized nationally by Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

Today, Red Ribbon Celebrations focus on raising awareness about substance abuse and violence prevention, early intervention, and treatment services.

To commemorate Red Ribbon Week, the Cabell County Substance Abuse Prevention Partnership has offered \$200 mini-grants to youth and school

groups in Cabell County. To apply for the grants, youth groups had to submit an application stating how they planned to celebrate Red Ribbon week and how they would spend the money. They also had to include media and community outreach components in their projects and submit a final report to CCSAPP.

For more information visit [www.redribboncoalition.com](http://www.redribboncoalition.com)



**Drinking age debate continued from page 1...**

In favor of the current drinking age:	In favor of a lower drinking age:
The 2006 Monitoring the Future survey found that 17.2 percent of 8 <sup>th</sup> graders, 33.8 percent of 10 <sup>th</sup> graders, 45.3 percent of 12 graders and 57.6 percent of those ages 19 or 20 had consumed alcohol in the past month.	19- and 20- year olds should be given a special license, similar to a driver's permit that would allow them to obtain a slow and safe introduction to this adult privilege, state Professor David J. Hanson, Dr. Dwight B. Heath, and Joel S. Rudy.
The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking notes that "adolescence is a time when the developing brain may be particularly susceptible to long-term negative effects from alcohol use." and that the brain continues to develop as people enter their twenties, "creating a significant and extended period during its development of potential exposure to alcohol's harmful effects."	Young adults under 21 are legally capable of voting, serving in the military and on jury's, and signing contracts, but not legally allowed to drink alcohol.
The current Minimum Legal Drinking Age has led to an increase in the number of high school seniors that have never drank alcohol from 8% in 1984 to 28% in 2007.	Our system, that offers abstinence as the only legal option to under age adults, has yielded little constructive behavior change amongst young adults.
State motor vehicle data from the 1970's revealed that lowering the MLPA from 21 to 18 for beer led to an increase of 11% in fatalities among this age group.	<p><b>For more information, visit:</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.nasadad.org/">www.nasadad.org/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.higheredcenter.org/">www.higheredcenter.org/</a></p> <p><a href="http://ncadd.org">ncadd.org</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.amethystinitiative.org/">www.amethystinitiative.org/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.marshallparthenon.com/">www.marshallparthenon.com/</a></p>
Studies have shown that those who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence during their lifetime than those who began drinking after they turned 21.	
Alcohol inhibits cognitive function and interrupts the REM cycle of sleep, which has negative effects on learning.	

## Drinking, Drugs, and Choosing a College

Is college life really all about drinking and drugs? Films like *Animal House* and *Road Trip* depict heavy drinking and other drug use as the focal point in college. Yet, students must remind themselves that the film industry's goal is to entertain, not to portray reality accurately.



### Why is it important for me to consider alcohol and other drug use when choosing a college?

If you end up at a campus where many students drink heavily, you're much more likely to suffer unwanted consequences due to their behavior. Do you really want to baby-sit a drunk roommate or have your property destroyed because of intoxicated dorm mates?

There is no question, college drinking can cause even more serious problems. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov)) reports that each year approximately 1,400 college students die from unintentional alcohol-related injuries. Alcohol is involved in 500,000 unintentional injuries, 600,000 assaults, and 70,000 cases of sexual assault and acquaintance rape among college students. By finding a campus where most students choose positive lifestyles, you decrease the chances for negative consequences.

Cabell County  
Substance Abuse Prevention  
Partnership

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#### **CCSAPP Calendar:**

**October 15- CCSAPP Meeting—noon**

**November 18 & 19- "Share the Vision" State-Wide Prevention Conference**

**November 26- CCSAPP Meeting- noon**

**January 2009- Cabell Drug Summit (rescheduled)**

**If you would like to arrange a presentation for your club, group or organization regarding local substance abuse issues please contact CCSAPP.**

