
Opinion

Guest column: Help for parents talking to kids about drugs

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Most of us are aware of the issues our country faces with opioid addiction, and Ashland County is no exception. We are now beginning to see a rise in methamphetamine use and alcohol addiction continues to be an issue.

In recent months Ashland County Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ACCADA) has been increasing its prevention efforts. We hope to engage parents, guardians and mentors by encouraging them to use the Start Talking program.

In 2011, the state of Ohio adopted a multi-pronged approach to fighting against drug abuse.

One approach has been the development of a website called, Start Talking. The effort was launched by Gov. John Kasich, and is geared toward parents and guardians. This website has been designed to give adults the necessary tools to start conversations about the importance of making healthy life choices and living drug-free. One of the leading contributing factors adolescents give for remaining drug-free is attributed to conversations with parents or guardians.

One of the programs on the Start Talking website is called KNOW!, which was developed by the Prevention Action Alliance in Columbus. The goal of the KNOW! Program is to help parents develop communication habits with their children regarding a substance-free life.

By signing up for this free program parents will receive two emails per month with tips for talking to children about drug use and refusing peer pressure, as well as current facts about tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. KNOW! places great emphasis on encouraging the habit of regular conversations about everyday life between parents and children.

Regular conversations help develop relationships. It's those relationships coupled with the habit of conversation about everyday life that make it much easier and more natural to move into deeper discussions with young people about drug use. As mentioned earlier, we find a positive correlation between adolescents who choose to remain drug-free and these regular conversations with parents.

Kris Hickey, ACCADA's senior prevention educator, encourages everyone who has children or works with children to visit the Start Talking website.

"As parents, educators or coaches, we're pretty good about talking with kids about alcohol or marijuana. However, we often forget to talk to them about those medications we may have in our homes. One pill can take anyone down a road they didn't intend. Start Talking is an excellent resource for reminding us to talk with our kids about things we might forget or overlook unintentionally," Hickey said.

AACCADA would like to take encourage our Ashland County parents and guardians to visit the Start Talking website at: starttalking.ohio.gov. Sign up for the twice monthly emails and engage with your children on this relevant and important topic. Once you've registered to receive the KNOW! emails, send us an email at _____ and let us know you've signed up and your thoughts on the website.

— Wendy Lemon is a prevention educator at the Ashland County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. ACCADA is a contract agency of the Mental Health and Recovery Board and is also is affiliated with the United Way of Ashland.