



# What's New For Schools

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, INC.

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## American Heart Month

By Dena Charbonneau, MSW, LSW, CPS

Since 1963, Congress has required the President to proclaim February "American Heart Month." The American Heart Association works with the administration to draft and sign an annual proclamation, because cardiovascular diseases are our nation's number one killer. Encourage your students to celebrate Valentine's Day this February by celebrating their heart.

Peer pressure, failing to make the right choices, staying inside watching TV or using the computer, lack of supervision, and lack of time are all things that interfere with kids practicing good health as they grow. It's up to the family to help children overcome these hurdles to good health.

Here are some tips for you to share with your students' families, offered by the American Heart Association, which can help children create heart-healthy habits. In addition to encouraging a healthy body, these tips also help foster developmental



assets, which will protect youth from high-risk behaviors such as alcohol use, illicit drug use, sexual activity, and violence. According to the Search Institute, developmental assets also have the power to promote positive attitudes and behaviors. Youth with more assets will succeed in school, value diversity, maintain good health, and delay gratification.

1. ***Be a positive role model.*** If you're practicing healthy habits, it's a lot easier to convince children to do the same.
2. ***Get the whole family active.*** Plan times for everyone to get moving together. Take walks, ride bikes, go swimming, garden or just play hide-and-seek outside. Everyone will benefit from the exercise and the time together.
3. ***Limit TV, video game, and computer time.*** These habits lead to a sedentary lifestyle.
4. ***Encourage physical activities that children really enjoy.*** Every child is unique. Let children experiment with different activities until each finds something that he or she really loves doing. They'll stick with it longer if they love it.
5. ***Be supportive.*** Focus on the positive instead of the negative. Everyone likes to be praised for a job well done. Celebrate successes and help children and teens develop a good self-image.
6. ***Set specific goals and limits.*** When goals are too abstract or limits too restrictive, the chance for success decreases.
7. ***Don't reward children with food.*** Candy and snacks as a reward encourage bad habits. Find other ways to celebrate good behavior.
8. ***Make dinnertime a family time.*** When everyone sits down together to eat, there's

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NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit community-based health organization serving Middlesex County. Our mission is to promote the health and well-being of individuals and communities of Middlesex County through the reduction or elimination of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use problems. Tax deductible contributions may be made to:

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## ONDCP to Host Random Student Drug-Testing Summit in Newark

By Steven G. Liga, MSW, LSW, LCADC, CPS

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) announced a regional summit to focus on random student drug testing. Random student drug testing is one of the most innovative substance abuse prevention and treatment tools available to parents and educators today. The summit will be held in Newark on March 27, 2007.

Attendees will learn about existing drug-testing programs, research, technology, funding possibilities, and legal issues related to random student drug testing. The summit will also engage local communities in a productive dialogue about the dangers of youth substance use and the efficacy of developing and implementing random student drug-testing programs to prevent, intervene in, and treat youth substance abuse.

Nearly 1,000 schools across the United States have initiated random student drug-testing programs. A locally-based, non-punitive random student drug-testing program achieves three important public health goals: (a) it deters children from initiating drug use, (b) it identifies children who have just started using drugs so that parents and counselors can intervene early, and (c) it helps identify children who have a dependency on drugs so that they can be referred to effective drug treatment.

Please visit <http://www.randomstudentdrugtesting.com/> for more information on the random student drug testing summit, and to learn more about this effective, community-based substance abuse prevention and treatment tool.

## Second in a Series - About Developmental Assets

*Reprinted from The Search Institute's Website (<http://www.search-institute.org/whatsnew/>)*

Search Institute has surveyed over two million youth across the United States and Canada since 1989. Researchers have learned about the experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and the number of Developmental Assets at work for these young people. Studies reveal strong and consistent relationships between the number of assets present in young people's lives and the degree to which they develop in positive and healthful ways. Results show that the greater the numbers of Developmental Assets are experienced by young people, the more positive and successful their development. The fewer the number of assets present, the greater the possibility youth will engage in risky behaviors such as drug use, unsafe sex, and violence.

The reality is that the average young person surveyed in the United States experiences only 19 of the 40 assets. Overall, 59% of young people surveyed have 20 or fewer of the 40 assets. In short, the majority of young people in this country—from all walks of life—are lacking in sufficient Developmental Assets needed for healthy development. These statistics, as well as the role assets play in predicting both positive and negative outcomes for youth, underscore the importance of the developmental asset framework and its application.



### Can Anything Be Done to Increase the Assets Young People Experience?

The answer is a resounding and hopeful yes! Adults and youth—in big and small ways—can help increase Developmental Assets in the daily lives of young people. What's needed is an understanding of what actions and behaviors breed success, willingness and ideas to apply that knowledge, and most importantly, a desire to see young people grow up happy, healthy, and confident.

In future issues of "What's New For Schools" we plan to share additional information about the Search Institute's Developmental Assets. If you wish to learn about SI's Developmental Assets yourself, please visit [www.search-institute.org/assets](http://www.search-institute.org/assets).

# PSA Contest Open to Middlesex County High School Students

By Rachel Prupis, MSW Intern

You've probably heard, numerous times, that drinking and driving do not mix, and in fact can have horrific consequences. Maybe your students understand the importance of this message, but unfortunately not everyone does. The truth is that the number one cause of death among teenagers is motor vehicle crashes, and it is estimated that at least 40% of these fatalities involve alcohol. The "bottom line" is that alcohol interferes with a person's ability to make good decisions. So, if you're asking, "What can I do about it?" Well, here's a unique opportunity to let your students' collective voice be heard while sharing a vital message with their peers and community.

Middlesex County High School students are encouraged to submit entries for the 8th Annual "Don't Drink and Drive" 3D Public Service Announcement Video Contest. Students can reach out to their peers by using their talents to create a PSA up to 30 seconds long, that will highlight the consequences of drinking and driving. One English and one Spanish PSA can be submitted from each school.

The top three PSA's will be awarded \$1,000, \$750, and \$500 respectively, to be used for Project Graduation or any Driver Safety and Awareness

Program.

The campaign will culminate with "Media Mix," providing students with workshops facilitated by local media personalities. The event will be followed by an award luncheon where all PSA's will be shown for the first time, winners will be announced, and all participants will be recognized. Winning students will also receive a gift certificate.

The 8th Annual "Don't Drink and Drive" 3D Public Service Announcement Video Contest is sponsored by:

- The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
- Middlesex County Superintendent of Schools
- Injury Prevention Program of the Level One Trauma Center Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital
- The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) of Middlesex County, Inc.

For more information, contact Rachel Prupis at NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. at 732-254-3344.

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less chance of children eating the wrong foods or snacking too much. Get the kids involved in cooking and planning meals. Everyone develops good eating habits together, and the quality time with the family will be an added bonus.

9. ***Make a game of reading food labels.*** The whole family will learn what's good for their health and be more conscious of what they eat. It's a habit that helps change behavior for a lifetime.

10. ***Stay involved.*** Be an advocate for healthier children. Contact public officials on matters of the heart. Make your voice heard.

Remember, the assets that children develop now, will last with them for a lifetime. These positive experiences will help them grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible adults.