

Be a Piece of the Puzzle: Teens Finding Their Way on a Slippery Road Dealing with Daily Pressures and Stressors

By DeAnna Pearl, Director of the Vernonia Prevention Coalition



According to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, American teens are using drugs and alcohol to deal with the pressures and stress of school. In a 2007 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, 73% of youth asked stated this fact indicating that teen perceptions of motivating factors for using drugs.

The top three reasons:

- 73% deal with stress
- 65% feeling cool
- 65% feeling better about themselves

Good News!!! Drug use among teens is on a steady downward trend on overall drug abuse. This also includes alcohol and cigarettes. However, over the past decade, studies have shown a steadily changing trend in what teens think of

as the motivations for using drugs. The "to have fun" idea is declining, while the motivations to use drugs to solve problems are increasing.

Unfortunately, teens' ongoing intentional abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications remains a serious concern, as many teens mistakenly believe the abuse of medicines is less dangerous than abuse of illegal drugs. According to Steve Pasierb, CEO of Partnership for a Drug-Free America, "Whether it's to get high or deal with stress, or if they mistakenly believe it will help them perform better in school or sports, teens don't realize that when used without a prescription, these medicines can be every bit as harmful as illegal street drugs."

On the flip side, a 2007 Partnership study of parents' attitudes about teen drug use, released in June 2007, showed

that parents severely underestimate the impact of stress on their teens' decision to use drugs. Only 7% of parents believe that teens might use drugs to cope with stress. It is ironic that an average parent spends a lot of time worrying about what they don't want for their child: drug use, early sexual activity, physical abuse, gangs, drinking, dropping out of school...arg! How do we cope?

TAKE A MOMENT-- Visualize what you do want for your child. Write it down, type it up or draw it out. Ask your child what they envision for themselves. Share with your child your vision. Plan how both of you can work together in making it happen. Often, this vision does not include ATOD's (Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs). Still don't know what to say? There is a website called TimeToTalk.org. This website has information on how to help parents

start and maintain open, honest dialogue with their kids about the risks of drugs and alcohol.

In Vernonia and around the state of Oregon, parenting classes focusing on families with kids between the ages of 10-14 are being offered. The Strengthening Families Project offers communication-building exercises for both the youth and parents separately and then create an opportunity in which they practice the new skills together. In Vernonia, a series of classes starts Monday, October 5th and runs for seven fun-filled weeks. If you would like more information on classes in Vernonia, contact Sonia Packman, SFP Trainer, at (503) 429-6540 or DeAnna Pearl, Vernonia Prevention Coalition, at (503) 369-7370.

(Excerpts taken from Partnership for a Drug-Free American press release, 8/5/2008, www.drugfree.org)

What's the Plan, Stan? A Monthly Update on City Planning

By Seth Lenaerts

If you have made a trip to City Hall lately, you may have noticed some changes. One of which, is that there is no longer a handsome young fellow working in the main office. That's right, I'm gone! My internship with the City ended at the end of August and I am on to wetter and windier places, specifically Lincoln City.

City administration has seen some changes too. The police department and public works have both added part-time directors. When these additions are coupled with a new full-time City administrator, Vernonia finds itself in a place it hasn't been in awhile, mostly staffed.

For planning purposes, the addition of a Public

Works Director and Chief of

Police, even if only part-time, is significant. Planning takes time and requires a big picture view. When a work force is understaffed, it's very difficult to do that. It's similar to a common-day occurrence that happens to me. It's 6 pm, I just got home from work, I'm hungry and I have a meeting to get to at 7 pm. I run to the store and grab the necessities to feed myself that night. It would be more effective if I would think long-term. If I spent a little more time shopping and got everything I needed for the next week, it would save me time and be more cost-effective. But like I said, I'm in a rush; my stomach is begging for food, I am just focusing on silencing the problem.

All cities have a lot of projects and tasks that need to be done-- many of which need to be done immediately, others should be done, and the list of tasks

coming down the pipe is endless. Hopefully, having directors will help to manage those projects and prepare for the duties that are on the horizon. I wish these new staff members the best of luck!

As for me, this will be the last monthly, *What's the plan, Stan?* Thanks to the *Vernonia's Voice* for giving me a medium to share my interest in planning. I intend on writing an article here and there if something interesting comes up, but we all know about the validity of intentions. I must say it has been a pleasure living and working here. Thank you for letting me take part in your community, I really enjoyed it! I have a lot more I could say, but I will leave you with this, pass the bond and stop using plastic bags!

Until next time, you don't have to be coy, Roy, just listen to me.

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Vernonia School District teachers and staff look over preliminary plans for the Vernonia School Campus with Architects that are designing the building.



Darrold Mushatt and Carol Davis show off the quilt Davis won in a raffle to help Mushatt raise money for his needed kidney transplant. Mushatt's wife, Teresa, looks on from the back left.

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