

Amherst Task Force video seeks to raise awareness of alcohol, marijuana use

The Amherst Task Force for Healthy Community * Healthy Youth has produced a video "Now It's Your Turn" which shows some troubling behaviors by young people in the Town.

The Task Force has been aware for some time that there are two deficit behaviors that many of our community's youth engage in that are putting their personal future at risk: the use of alcohol and the use of marijuana. To help address this problem, the Task Force, through financial support from a Drug Free Community Grant, has engaged the services of J. C Hogarth de la Plante Associates to produce a video to be used in a town-wide media campaign to raise awareness to the problem.

Amherst is a great place to live and that is also apparent in the video. We have great schools and our town provides services for its residents that are second to none. We are rich in our capacity to recognize and address problems because we live in a community that cares. The Task Force is actively seeking groups that would be interested in viewing the video. A presentation can be set up by calling Anne Rohrer at the Amherst Youth Board at 631-7215.

The video, appropriately titled "Now It's Your Turn", asks each of us to think about what we are doing to diminish the use of alcohol and/or marijuana in our Town. This month we asked some young people what they are doing or what they are willing to do to address this concern. Below are their responses.

Ali, age 13: "I can tell people how alcohol and marijuana use will change their life."

Jacob, age 13: "Talk to parents of friends in order to inform them of the danger of these drugs."

Marisa, age 13: "I can encourage kids to become more active in their schools and community. If they are playing in a game of soccer then their minds will be on soccer and not drugs or alcohol."

Christina, age 13: "In my school I can make an announcement that will have students be aware of problems these drugs cause. Hopefully, the information I spread will travel around the town."

Shanice, age 14: "I am willing to do work with peers; explaining why alcohol and drugs are bad."

Jacqueline, age 14: "I will be a positive person for people to talk to if they have a problem or are thinking of trying alcohol. I can help them get help because it's not enough to just tell someone where help is."

Andrew, age 14: "I will stay in contact with my friends so I would know if they are using any of those things. And get active in school with other people so they don't have the chance of using drugs."

Rachel, age 14: "We should show the video "Now It's Your Turn", to as many people as we can and inform them about the dangers and consequences of alcohol and marijuana."

Kathryn, age 14: "I would talk to 5th, 6th and 7th

graders and tell them the bad stuff that could happen so they won't start even when under peer pressure."

Courtney, age 14: "I may talk to schools about setting up a club based on discussions about these issues. I may become a friend with someone who needs to be pointed in the right direction of stopping."

Cadie, age 15: "I will try to be a positive role model to younger kids and to peers. I will show them, and tell them, that you can live a great life without drugs and alcohol."

Chelsea, age 15: "As a student, I can openly be against the use of drugs by stating why it's important to stay away from them."

Rudy, age 15: "One thing I will do to diminish the use of alcohol and marijuana in my community is to tell my friends not to use them."

Emily, age 15: "I will set an example to kids that are younger than me by doing things with them that are not alcohol and/or marijuana related. By setting this example it might help them overcome peer pressure to use these substances."

Mark, age 15: "A presentation in the schools would be the path to go because then you are able to discuss the effects of drugs in schools. Kids need to discuss how alcohol and marijuana is destroying student activity. Something that is visual would be beneficial."

Lindsay, age 15: "I will provide positive peer pressure to my friends, and also others that I am surrounded by. I will also continue to stay strong willed and will not accept negative peer pressure to better my health and well being. I will advise friends on the dangers of becoming addicted to such substances."

Tyler, age 15: "I will not participate in drug and alcohol use, and by doing that, I may influence others."

Esha, age 15: "I will come up with fun and healthy ways that my friends and I can spend our Friday and Saturday nights. This means going to each other houses of people we know."

Akanimo, age 15: "I will advise my friends not to use these dangerous items."

Pooja, age 15: "I will talk to kids in school and help out at after school programs and summer camps for children."

Ashley, age 15: "I can tell people about how much the use of alcohol and marijuana can affect and change your life."

Kristen, age 15: "Simply say no! It's that easy. Teenagers need to stop thinking its cool and "every-

one does it" — not everyone does. I obviously don't because I have the strength and stamina, and pure gumption, to simply say no to drugs and alcohol."

Emily, age 15: "I can spread the word about how people can say 'no' and I can warn parents about situations that might be risky for kids. (eg. party without parents around). I may also be able to provide suggestions for parents if they want to know how to talk with their kids about alcohol and drugs."

Avery, age 16: "I can use my voice and my own actions to exemplify to my peers that alcohol and marijuana use is inappropriate and that "there are better ways to get high" — get high on life."

Mike, age 16: "I refuse to engage in these negative activities, which in turn, may sway others to do the same. Leading by example can be a very powerful tool."

Carol, age 16: "If any of my friends, or anyone I know, thinks about using alcohol or marijuana, I can talk to them and convince them not to use it."

Lauren, age 16: "I can do my best to educate my peers on the dangers of this type of behavior. I believe communicating the possible results of those actions; I can advocate a level of resistance among my friends and classmates."

Mike, age 17: "With just being a single person, it can be extremely hard to stand up for yourself and what you believe in. Peer pressure is real. If you go against the group, you risk being ostracized. To be excluded seems like social death in high school. The best way to counter act this is to be proud to be an individual and go against the 'cool' thing. Hopefully, with your strength in standing up for yourself, others will follow. I will stand tall and stand proud no matter how much I'm pressured."

Katie, age 17: "I will encourage my friends to make positive choices and to remember that his/her decisions affect everyone around them. I will suggest other fun opportunities such as watching the Sabres, going out to eat or watching a movie."

Steve, age 17: "Crack down on your kids (for parents), know what they're doing and with who. Friends, start cracking down on your friends."

*The Healthy Community*Healthy Youth column is presented as a forum for family discussion. Next month we will hear from the adults in the community on this topic. Your comments and suggestions are welcome. If you have an idea for a topic, please let us hear from you. Send a note to the Amherst Task Force, 4255 Harlem Road, Amherst, N.Y. 14226 or e-mail Sally@eccpasa.info*



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