

In The Know

A monthly newsletter to keep you current and In The Know on topics related to the Prevention of Substance Abuse

February—Marijuana Awareness Month

Each February health promoters bring the topic of marijuana to light to spread the word about the misconceptions and dangers of marijuana use. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse marijuana is the most commonly abused illicit drug in the United States. It is important for society to spread the right messages concerning marijuana use and fight this growing addiction for generations to come.

This psychoactive drug became popular in the 1960s and is still widely abused today. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2007, 14.4 million Americans age 12 and older used marijuana at least once within the month prior to being surveyed (*National Institute on Drug Abuse*). Many youth are under the impression that since marijuana is a plant it is natural and safe. It is important to get education out to the malleable youth.

Marijuana contains THC (*delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol*) along with over 400 other chemicals. THC causes the mind alerting effect. The amount of THC is far greater than the amount found in 1970s marijuana. Any amount of THC can cause changes in perceptions, mood, and coordination. Today's marijuana poses an even greater threat than 40 years ago.

Slang names include pot, weed, grass, dope and Mary Jane. It can be smoked or ingested and goes into the blood stream where it is carried to the brain. Studies have been conducted to find the cancer risk; it was found that one joint is as harmful as 20 tobacco cigarettes. Reproductive systems in both men and women are negatively impacted by using this illegal drug.

The immediate effects include dry mouth, increased hunger, red eyes,

loss of coordination, and the inability to have fine muscle coordination. Car accidents, cancer, and dopamine damage can be attributed to marijuana use. People that drive under the influence have claimed many lives. Someone under the influence of marijuana parallels some of the symptoms of driving under the influence of alcohol. The lack of coordination and decreased response time pose the danger for both substances. A study in Memphis, TN, found that of 150 reckless drivers who were tested for drugs at the arrest scene, 33 percent tested positive for marijuana, and 12 percent tested positive for both marijuana and cocaine (*National Institute of Drug Abuse*).

For more information please call (607) 776-6441.



Marijuana, the Debate Continues

The use of marijuana to treat medical ailments is sparking a heated debate across America as many weighing in on the topic lack proper credible information about this issue. Many, especially teens, feel that marijuana is harmless. They are often unaware that only a few states have approved "medical marijuana" and that no state has legalized marijuana for recreational use.

As we look at marijuana we know that there are consequences with use as with

any drug or medication. However, the one key point to remember is that no medications currently on the market are smoked. The reason being is there are numerous negative health effects that accompany smoking anything. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a study concluding "there is little to no medical value to smoked marijuana for virtually any ailment," they did recognize that THC, the active compound in marijuana may be "potentially therapeutic." This does not mean that mari-

juana as a whole is therapeutic, only the THC within the marijuana.

Marijuana, in numerous medical studies, has been linked to greater risks of heart disease, lung cancer, bronchitis and emphysema. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that "marijuana has the potential to promote cancer of the lungs and other parts of the respiratory tract because marijuana smoke contains 50 to 70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than

does tobacco smoke" (NIDA, 2001).

It is important to note that while THC may have some benefits, marijuana by itself is not safe, it alters moods, feelings and body chemistry and can lead to addiction. It is also important to become educated about this topic, but to be careful of the source of information. Contact Steuben Council on Addictions at (607) 776-6441.

Do you or someone you care about need help because of Drugs, Alcohol or Gambling call:

1-877-8HOPENY (1-877-846-7369)

24 hours a day, 7 days a week * Free & confidential information and referrals.

In The Know and By The Numbers

A brief look at current statistics and figures relating to the topic of Marijuana use.

- Reaction time for motor skills, such as driving, is reduced by 41% after smoking 1 joint and is reduced 63% after smoking 2 joints.
- There were a total of 1,846,351 state and local arrests for drug abuse violations in the United States during 2005. Of the drug arrests, 4.9% were for marijuana sale/manufacturing and 37.7% were for marijuana possession.
- In 1995, 165,000 people entering drug treatment programs reported marijuana as their primary drug of addiction, showing they need help to stop using the drug.
- 62% of adults who had used marijuana before the age of 15 have used cocaine at some point during their lives. For those who had never used

marijuana, that number is .6%.

- 53.9% of those who used marijuana before the age of 15 report that they have also tried to use psychotherapeutic drugs for non-medical uses. The rate for those who have not used marijuana is 5.1%. (www.gdcada.org/statistics/marijuana.htm)
- According to *The National Institute on Drug Abuse*, studies of high school students and their patterns of drug use show that very few young people use other drugs without first trying marijuana.
- According to *The Partnership for A Drug-Free America Attitude Tracking Study*, two-thirds of youth ages 13-17 say losing their parents' respect is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs.

- Using marijuana weekly or more frequently puts teens at risk for dangerous emotional problems, such as doubling a teen's risk of depression and anxiety. (anti-drug.com)
- According to a report from *The National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, first use of marijuana among recent new users was highest during June (11%) and July (11%) and lowest during November (7%) and December (6%).



Steuben Council SCA on Addictions

Information, Assessments & Referrals

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Catholic Charities

Steuben County

www.catholiccharitiessteuben.org

The Council Corner

A look at Steuben Council on Addictions and the projects they are working on

Steuben Council on Addictions would like to thank the Bethesda Foundation of Hornell for their generous grant that enabled our agency to purchase numerous DVDs for our resource library. Educational multimedia can be very expensive, so we are grateful to receive funding to purchase

these much needed DVDs. Steuben Council on Addictions has been fortunate to receive other grants from the Bethesda Foundation.

Our agency is also looking for funds to purchase three Reality Works dolls. Each doll mimics the effects

of different types of maltreatment: Shaken Baby Syndrome, Drug-Affected and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. These would be an excellent addition to our resource library, meaning they could be borrowed from us for free for one month by any school or organization in Steuben County

and used by our agency to further enhance our own programming. Please contact Tess McKinley at tmckinley@dor.org if you have any information on funding or have questions about this project. SCA is excited to start working with the Addison and Campbell-Savona School Districts Afterschool Programs, which are funded by a Twenty First Century grant. We will be presenting on a weekly basis on various topics for teens such as hygiene, respect and other important issues. We are also facilitating a girls group for the afterschool program in Campbell-Savona. If you are interested in prevention programming, please let us know by calling (607) 776-6441.



Prevention Educators Barbara Blais; Stacey O'Dell; and Tess McKinley. Back L. To R. Prevention Director James Bassage; Bethesda Board Member Joe Latham displaying the newly purchased videos.

Steuben Council on Addictions is a division of Catholic Charities Steuben. In *The Know* is a regular monthly update about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to help in the prevention of substance use and abuse. For more information on *In The Know* contact Stacey O'Dell, Prevention Educator at (607) 776-6441, x. 205 or sodell@dor.org.