

*An initiative of the Pledge for Life Partnership*

## Raising one voice for Illinois' children

Local child advocates have joined with Voices for Illinois Children — a non-profit, non-partisan, statewide group created to give people a unified voice to achieve improvements and lasting changes for the children of Illinois.

The **Kankakee Voices Leadership Committee** and other local committees are helping to create public policy that will improve the lives of thousands of children and their families. In Illinois today, one out of 10 children does not have health insurance; 16.8 percent of high school freshman will not graduate; and more than 50,000 young, at-risk



*Pam Debono*

children are not receiving the preschool services they need.

"Although the state has the resources necessary to meet these needs, the political will to do right by Illinois' children and their families has not been fully activated," said Pam Debono, chairperson of the local committee

The **Kankakee Voices Leadership Committee** is comprised of leaders from business, law enforcement, education, health, social service, civic groups and others. New members are welcome. To learn more or to join, contact Pamela Debono at 939-1648.

### *Frequently Requested Information*

[Aging Issues](#)

[Education Issues](#)

[Family Issues](#)

[Health Care Issues](#)

[Legal Issues](#)

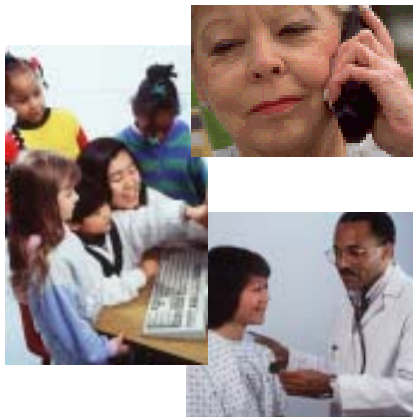
[Mental Health Matters](#)

[Substance Abuse Issues](#)

## Making things just a little bit easier!



Kankakee-Iroquois Regional  
Information Network



[www.kan-i-help.org](http://www.kan-i-help.org)

**DIRECTORY OF  
HUMAN SERVICES**

Whether you're selling real estate or social reform, if you're in the business of working with people, the KAN-I HELP Information Network can make your job a little bit easier.

By providing quick and easy access to information about hundreds of local human service agencies and more, KAN-I HELP can help you direct others to the information they need to succeed.

KAN-I HELP was designed specifically for residents of

Kankakee and Iroquois counties. The website was launched in 1999 and now boasts nearly 700 listings. Because the website is continually updated, that number grows daily. KAN-I HELP also has a printed companion directory that is currently being updated and due for publication this fall.

But KAN-I HELP is more than just a listing of service providers. It provides a venue for information sharing. Publications like the **Parent's Page** and **Lifelines** newsletters keep parents and the professionals who work with them informed about new resources and the latest human development research findings. KAN-I HELP also includes a resource library with more than 1,200 titles that are available for check-out.

The KAN-I HELP Information Network is maintained by the Pledge for Life Partnership and receives support from partner agencies. Partners are entitled to a seat on the KAN-I HELP Policy Council which oversees the decision-making process of the network. To learn how your organization can become a partner, call Roxanne Hooper, KAN-I HELP community liaison at 936-4606.

# DON'T LOOK THE OTHER WAY ... START TALKING NOW!

## Prevention initiative gains support

Community support is growing for the Pledge for Life Partnership's **"Don't Look the Other Way ... Start Talking Now!"** prevention initiative to unite parents, neighbors, law enforcement officers, community groups and alcohol retailers in an effort to keep alcohol out of the hands of youth.

Underage drinking is a problem that costs the nation an estimated \$53 billion a year in lost work time, insurance costs and increased crimes. Statistics show that 96 percent of alcoholics started drinking before the legal age and alcohol kills more young people than all illegal drugs combined. It is a factor in the four leading causes of adolescent death and research shows that alcohol use before age 21 can cause permanent brain damage.

**Don't Look the Other Way ... Start Talking Now!** focuses on two educational videos produced by the Partnership: *"Teen Drinking – It's Not Like You Remember"* and *"Teen Drinking & Corporate Profits."*

More than 60 people viewed the videos at a town hall meeting on March 27 at Kankakee Community College. Many received toolkits including DVDs of both videos, discussion guides and additional resource materials to take back into their communities.

The Partnership is recruiting leadership team members to show the DVDs at service clubs, church groups, neighborhood associations and anywhere else they can get folks to listen. Anyone interested in viewing the DVDs or showing them to a group, should contact the Partnership office at 936-4606.



*Above, Robert Gound, principal of Grant Park High School, Kassy Lane a student at Kankakee High School, Gene Jackson of Communication Outreach Committee of Pembroke, Diana Calderon, a KCC student, Kathy Abbot, a counselor at Momence High School and Mike Powers of the Iroquois County Juvenile Probation Department discuss various suggestions on how to combat the local underage drinking problem.*

## A look at local stats

The nationally recognized PRIDE Survey has been used since 1989 to gather information about underage drinking habits and other behaviors. Last year, 4,500 students in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in Iroquois and Kankakee counties were surveyed. Responses revealed:

- Young people in both counties use alcohol more than any other illegal substance.
- Though some students began drinking in elementary school, use among junior high school students rose alarmingly – to as high as 49 percent among 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Iroquois County and 38 percent among 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Kankakee County.
- 80 percent of high school seniors in Iroquois County and 72 percent in Kankakee County reported that they drank alcohol.
- Alcohol use among 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Iroquois County is 13 percent higher than the national average.
- Alcohol use among 12<sup>th</sup> graders in both counties is as high as 12 percent higher than the national average.
- 49 percent of seniors in Iroquois County and 32 percent of seniors in Kankakee County reported having driven in a car after or while drinking.
- More than 75 percent of teens in both counties believe their parents disapprove of underage alcohol use, but only 15 percent in Iroquois County and 22 percent in Kankakee County reported that their parents talk to them about problems related to alcohol.



**KAN-I HELP's website contains direct links to state and national organizations. For more information about alcohol or underage drinking, visit KAN-I HELP's "Quick Links to Substance Abuse Issues."**

# Illinois first to offer *Preschool for All*

Illinois House of Representatives passed legislation May 6 that will make Illinois the first state in the nation to open public preschool to all three and four-year-olds.

An additional \$45 million has been added to next year's state budget to fund **Preschool For All** – a program that will expand early learning opportunities to an estimated additional 10,000 children statewide. The program would reach about 1,000 more children in Kankakee County alone over a five year period. The state's current pre-k program is for at-risk children only and serves 600 local children.

**Preschool for All** will continue to prioritize at-risk children, but also will serve middle-income families who cannot afford private preschool and who do not have access to quality public school programs because they are not categorized as "at risk for school readiness."

Currently, each district sets eligibility requirements within state guidelines that define at-risk children. Fine and gross motor skills, cognitive development, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, vocabulary, English proficiency and social competence are assessed. Most districts also consider other criteria, such as having parents who are low income, have a low education level or have a history of drug or alcohol abuse; speak a primary language other



Photo source:Norfolk.org

than English; have a parent who is a teenager or a guardian who is not the parent; and those who have been referred by another state agency

"We are very excited about this legislation," said Pam Debono, chairperson of the Kankakee Voices Leadership Committee. "We have local families right now who want to participate in the current state preschool program, but can't because there are not enough funds to serve them."

Preschool takes advantage of a period of rapid brain development and can help lay a strong educational and social foundation for success in elementary school and beyond, she explained. Studies show that children who go to preschool are less likely to need special education; more likely to graduate from high school; less likely to encounter the juvenile justice system; and will earn more money as adults.

Kankakee City Police Chief Mike Kinkade agrees. As a 30 year veteran of the force, he has witnessed the endless cycle of criminal activity and anti-social behavior again and again, he said "As a member of the anti-crime organization, "Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois," I am aware of the positive impact that preschool programs have on breaking the cycle of youth crime and violence."

The concern now is to find enough room to implement the program, Debono

continued. "Many local school districts are already out of classroom space. One possible solution might be to open up classrooms in community-based preschool centers. They would be held to the same high standards as the school-based programs. **Preschool for All** would fund two and a half hours per day of classroom sections, up to five days per week."

To ensure full success, **Preschool for All** must be coupled with true school funding reform, funding all grades of public education at the levels recommended, Debono stressed. "In the long run, **Preschool for All** will save on what we currently spend on remediation and the criminal justice system."

To learn more, contact Pam Debono, Kankakee Voices Leadership committee chairperson, at 939-1648 or visit Voices for Illinois Children at [www.voices4kids.org](http://www.voices4kids.org).

*Do you know someone looking for child care?*



**KAN-I HELP** requires no special password or login to access information. You can either browse agencies alphabetically, by category or do a keyword search.

Visit Child Care Resource and Referral for Kankakee County at [www.childcarehelp.com](http://www.childcarehelp.com) or Childcare Resource Service for Iroquois County at [www.ag.uiuc.edu/CCRSCare](http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/CCRSCare).

*Making a difference . . .*

# Share your area of expertise

There are numerous ways you can make a difference in a young person's life. By sharing your time, talent and other resources with programs sponsored by the I-KAN Regional Office of



*Judge Kathy Bradshaw-Elliott of the 21st Judicial Circuit Court is a regular guest presenter for Life Education Center's junior and senior high school underage drinking prevention curriculum. Here, she explains the legal consequences of underage drinking to Class Action students at the I-KAN Regional Alternative Attendance Center.*

Education, the Life Education Centers and the Pledge for Life Partnership, you and your organization can help increase opportunities for area youth. Here are some ways you can help:

Instructors and other resources are needed to provide extended learning opportunities at ten 21st Century Learning Centers and two Teen REACH after school program sites. These programs provide students with year-round academic assistance and enrichment activities that extend beyond the regular school day.

The I-KAN Attendance Assistance Program works to promote daily school attendance. Incentives, adult consultations, worksite visits and community service placement projects are needed to give students career-related experiences which will add relevancy to their education and teach responsibility and respect.

The Life Education Center programs teach students in kindergarten through high school the benefits of making sound, healthy choices. People, particularly those working in health care or law enforcement -- are needed to reinforce these lessons. Guest presenters are specifically needed for the junior and senior high school underage drinking curriculum.

Volunteers also are needed to help with the Partnership's 2007 Family

Fun-a-thon on February 18. In addition to being a fundraiser for the LEC programs, the event shows families that it is possible to have fun without the use of alcohol or other drugs. Many activities are planned including a 3-on-3 basketball tournament and talent showcase. New ideas and new members are always welcomed at committee planning meetings. Volunteers also are needed to work the event. Of course, monetary and in-kind donations are much appreciated.

In addition, the Partnership works with numerous local and state committees that provide members with an opportunity to exchange information. Examples include the Project Care Suicide Prevention Committee, the Life Education Committee, the Juvenile Justice Councils, the Family Violence Coordinating Council, the Hispanic Partnership, Early Childhood Education Council, Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership, Local Interagency Council, Child & Adolescent Local Area Networks, Ford-Iroquois Health Improvement Coalition, Kankakee County Mental Health Council, Simple Acts Steering Committee, ROCK of Kankakee and more.

To learn more about getting involved with any of these programs, contact the Partnership at 936-4606.



**Lifelines** 

This edition of **Lifelines** was published by the Pledge for Life Partnership in cooperation with the KAN-I HELP Policy Council with funding from the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley.

Pledge for Life Partnership is located in the County Administration Building, 189 E. Court St., Suite 403, Kankakee, IL. 60901 (815) 936-4606 FAX: 933-2314

[www.pledgeforlife.org](http://www.pledgeforlife.org)

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## **KAN-I HELP's Directory of Services**

**provides contact information for legislators and other local, state and national agencies.**

*State Representative Lisa Dugan looks over local stats provided by the Pledge for Life Partnership at the drug prevention forum held April 28 at KCC.*



## Promoting children's mental health

# New standards focus on social & emotional learning

Illinois is one of the first states to adopt Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as a required area of learning and now, in addition to traditional academic work, children also will focus on developing social and emotional skills.

SEL is the way children become aware of, manage and express their emotions; make and meet personal goals; develop positive relationships; make good decisions and become good citizens. SEL



*The Life Education Committee examines ways to raise awareness about the new SEL standards.*

standards will be measured in preschool and continue throughout high school.

Children's mental health advocates view this as a major victory, said Teresa Turner, assistant coordinator of the I-KAN Regional Office of Education's InTouch program and co-facilitator of the Life Education Committee. The Life Education Committee was formed two years ago to examine research-based curriculums that could be adopted by human service agencies.

"SEL is about mental health and finally, we are realizing that a child's emotional health is as critical as his or her physical health."

Advocacy groups like Voices for Illinois Children have been leading the statewide movement on children's mental health issues and are making a difference. On May 4, the Illinois General Assembly approved \$5 million for the FY2007 budget for the

Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership: \$2 million is line itemed for the Department of Human Services/Department of Mental Health; and \$3 million has been appropriated to the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Life Education Committee is planning a community-wide awareness campaign that explains SEL, Turner continued. "We all have mental health, but there is such a stigma attached to mental health issues that the committee thought this would be a great opportunity to educate the public about the new standards and how they will help children now and later in life."

For more information about SEL or other mental health issues, visit KAN-I HELP's "**Quick Links to Mental Health Matters.**"



*Becoming the best ...*

## KAN-I HELP needs your help

Because the KAN-I HELP Information Network is only as good as the information it receives, we are asking for your help to make it the best resource possible.

If your organization isn't listed with KAN-I HELP, we encourage you to become a part of this unique information system. There is no fee for human service agencies to be listed in the directory or on the website.

Agencies that are already listed, are asked to visit [www.kan-i-help.org](http://www.kan-i-help.org) to review their listing to make sure that all information is correct. Organizations that have websites are asked to consider adding a link to KAN-I HELP's website.

**KAN-I HELP's printed directory is scheduled to be printed this summer. To purchase a copy or multiple copies, call 936-4606. Cost for each copy is \$10.**

Organizations also are encouraged to become directly involved with KAN-I HELP policy making by becoming a member of the policy council.

**To be included in the directory, make changes to existing listings, or learn more about becoming a KAN-I HELP Partner, contact Roxanne Hooper, at [rhooper@i-kan.org](mailto:rhooper@i-kan.org) or at 936-4606.**

## KAN-I HELP Partner Agencies

Ford-Iroquois Public  
Health Department

Iroquois-Kankakee  
Regional Office of Education

Junior League of  
Kankakee County

Kankakee County Head Start

Kankakee County  
Health Department

Pledge for Life Partnership

Riverside HealthCare

Teen REACH

Twenty-First Judicial Circuit  
Family Violence  
Coordinating Council



**Pledge for Life  
Partnership**

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*Mary Kay Ballard, school social worker for Iroquois West CUSD No. 10, takes advantage of materials in KAN-I HELP's Resource Center. The Resource Center is maintained by the Pledge for Life Partnership and located on the fourth floor of the County Administration Building at 189 E. Court Street in Kankakee.*



**KAN-I HELP's Resource Library holds more than 1,200 titles on a variety of topics including alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse prevention; bullying, conflict resolution; life skills training; and parenting.**

**For more information or a list of titles, call the Pledge for Life Partnership at 936-4606.**

***Thank You ...***

***to the Community  
Foundation of  
Kankakee River Valley  
for providing the  
funding to publish this  
edition of Lifelines and  
for spreading the word  
about the KAN-I HELP  
Information Network.***

**[www.kan-i-help.org](http://www.kan-i-help.org)**