

# The Parent's Page



**KAN-I  
HELP**

**Information Network**



**Pledge for Life  
Partnership**

*Celebrating Wise Highs ... Choices for a Lifetime*

*Spring 2006*

## Town Hall Meeting addresses underage drinking

The Pledge for Life Partnership launched its initiative at a town hall meeting examining local problems with underage drinking on March 27 at Kankakee Community College.

For more than three years, the Partnership has worked with the U.S. Department of Education's Grant to Reduce Alcohol Abuse to provide instruction to students and their parents through the Life Education Center programs. **Don't Look the Other Way ... Start Talking Now!** is a culmination of these efforts and focuses on two educational videos produced by the Partnership, "Teen Drinking - It's Not Like You Remember" and "Teen Drinking & Corporate Profits."

Town hall meetings were held nationwide to kick-off National Alcohol Awareness Month in April. **Don't Look the Other Way ... Start Talking Now!** hopes to unite parents, neighbors, law enforcement officers, community groups and alcohol retailers in a serious effort keep alcohol out of the hands of youth. Parents are being urged to talk to their children early - before they enter junior



*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.*

and senior high school — and to keep enforcing the "No-Use" message until they reach 21.

Underage drinking is a problem that affects everyone and costs the nation an estimated \$53 billion a year in lost work time, insurance costs and increased crime. "That doesn't begin to include the human suffering," said Debra Baron, director of the Partnership. Alcohol kills more young people than all illegal drugs combined and is a factor in the four leading causes of adolescent death including automobile accidents, homicide, suicide and other unintentional injury.

Parents have the most influence in their children's decision not to drink, she continued. However, many fail to let their kids know they disapprove or tell

their children not to use, and then look the other way when it becomes obvious that their child is drinking. In the worst situations, parents knowingly allow underage drinking. "Parents — even those who drank as a youth — need to give their children an excuse not to join their peers in getting drunk. We hope they will take advantage of the resources we have available to help them keep their children from engaging in this risky behavior" she added.

Statistics show that 96 percent of alcoholics started drinking before the legal age and there is new research that shows alcohol use before age 21 can cause permanent brain damage.

Town Hall participants also looked at local underage drinking behaviors in



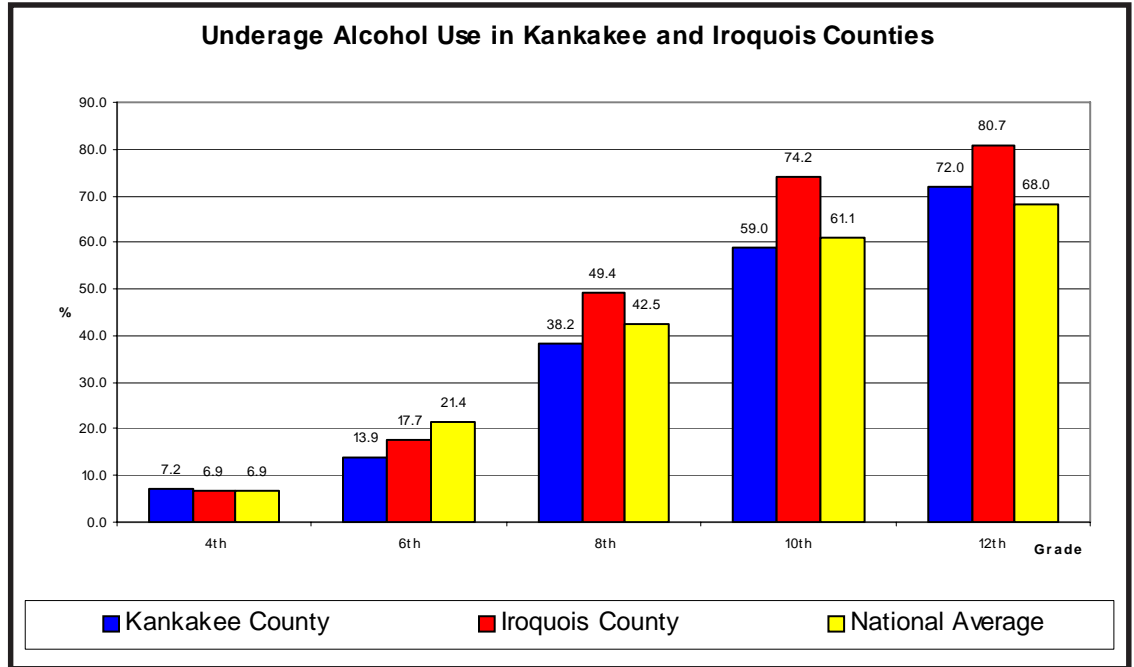
**Underage drinking facts for  
Kankakee and Iroquois  
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# Underage drinking in Kankakee and Iroquois counties

The Pledge for Life Partnership and the I-KAN Regional Office of Education have been using the nationally recognized PRIDE Survey since 1989 to gather information from area students 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 Kankakee and Iroquois counties were surveyed. The 2006 survey is underway. Responses from the 2005 survey 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.
- ▲ 72 percent of high school seniors in Kankakee County reported that they drank alcohol.
- ▲ 80 percent of high school seniors in Iroquois 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 between 4 and 12 percent higher than the national average.
- ▲ 32 percent of seniors in Kankakee County reported having driven in a car after or while drinking.



The chart illustrates reported drinking behaviors of youth in Kankakee and Iroquois counties.

- ▲ 49 percent of seniors in Iroquois 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 22 percent (Kankakee) to 15 percent (Iroquois) reported that their parents talk to them about problems related to alcohol.

## Continued from front page ...

Kankakee and Iroquois counties using information provided from the 2005 PRIDE Survey. (See related story.) To combat the problem, participants agreed that more alcohol-free activities needed to be made available to youth and that youth should be directly involved in planning such activities. In addition, more must be done in the area of parent education.

“We’re hoping people will take what they learned from the town hall meeting and bring it back into their communities. We invite all parents and other adults to be a part of this effort,” Baron said. Eager to have as many people as possible view the videos, the Partnership is recruiting Leadership Team members to show them at service clubs, church groups, neighborhood associations and anywhere else they can get folks to listen. Leaders will receive discussion guides, additional resources and handouts as part of a toolkit that includes a DVD with the videos on it.

The Partnership also has been working with local law enforcement and is developing materials for them to distribute. Radio, television and billboard ads are currently running in the area.

Anyone interested in viewing the DVDs or showing them to a group, should contact the Partnership office at 936-4606.



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## FIFTH GRADERS LEARN HOW ALCOHOL DAMAGES THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

*Students in Cindy McBarnes 5th grade class at Liberty Intermediate School in Bourbonnais received a sobering lesson about how alcohol can permanently damage their developing brains from principal Paul Snellenberger as part of the National Reach Out Now Teach-In event held April 6 in the visiting mobile Life Education Center.*

*Teach-Ins were held all over the country and were sponsored by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Scholastic, Inc. Lessons, which target 5th and 6th graders, encourage parents to talk to their kids early about the dangers of underage drinking.*

*Reach Out Now Teach-In lessons also were taught to students in: Mr. Wachholz's 6th grade class at St. Paul's Lutheran in Kankakee; Ms. Hancock's 5th grade class at Milford Grade School; Ms. Mills, Ms. Lilienthal, Ms. Sadler and Ms. Teske's 5th grade classes at Bradley West; Ms. Lund, Mr. Self, Ms. Sikma and Ms. Hendrick's 6th grade classes at Momence Junior High School; and Ms. Viglia and Ms. English's 6th grade classes at King Middle Grade School.*



*Paul Snellenberger poses with Brenda Wetzel, LEC coordinator, and Cindy McBarnes, 5th grade teacher at the Teach-In on April 6.*

## Thank you, Mr. Snellenberger

The Pledge for Life Partnership recognized Liberty Intermediate principal Paul Snellenberger for his continued support of the Life Education Center's healthy lifestyle and substance abuse prevention programs.

Snellenberger was a founding member of the LEC Advisory Board and has served on it since 1989.

Keeping kids safe from alcohol



is like

flying a kite.

**Holding tight -- letting go.**

And with time, we can watch them fly.

Let them reach for the sky, but with strings attached.

**Strings -- lifelines** to help keep safe from alcohol.

**Curfews work -- enforce them.**

Lock up your alcohol, count, track it. **Love as a parent -- not as a friend.**

Set rules-- voice them, follow them.

**Don't be swayed by what other parents are doing.**

Never buy alcohol for kids because you think it's safer.

**If you think your child is drinking, he probably is -- Address it NOW.**

Limit alcohol at your own parties -- kids are watching.

**Never look the other way when alcohol is being used by underage youth.**

Band together with other like-minded parents.

**Face it -- as a parent, you will be the bad guy sometimes.**

Don't be afraid of losing your child's love, be afraid of losing them.

Source: FACE

# KAN-I HELP Network News ...

*Your Money, Your Life:*

## Program teaches how to manage personal finances



A statewide financial education program designed to help low-income adults and young parents get the skills they need to effectively manage their money is being offered at no cost in Kankakee County in partnership with the YWCA of Kankakee, National City Bank and Financial Links for Low-Income People (FLLIP), a

statewide coalition coordinated by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.

The program uses the *Your Money, Your Life* curriculum and provides 12 hours of instruction designed to help low-income people facing welfare limits, economic downturns and challenges such as predatory lending, high-cost check cashing services and a lack of familiarity with traditional financial institutions. The program focuses on skills needed to manage debt and establish good credit; save money for a home, business, education or car; avoid predatory lending; receive the Earned Income Tax Credit; and use mainstream financial institutions.

“This course can help low-income people become financially self-sufficient,” said Sandra Knight, executive director of the YWCA of Kankakee. Low-income adults and young parents often lack information that could help them make sound choices with their money. They are vulnerable to payday loans and financial crises that can occur when families don’t have savings. “We don’t want people to miss this great opportunity.” To learn more, call Sandra Knight at 933-4516.

## Martial Arts for kids with special needs

For kids  
Ages 5 to 9

10:30 to 11 a.m.  
Mondays & Wednesdays  
June 5-29 at

Tri-Star Martial Arts Academy  
in Bradley

Second session  
starts July 10.

Cost is \$8



Tri-Star Martial Arts Academy  
“Martial Arts for the Whole Family”



For more information call Easter Seals at 932-0623.

## TOPICS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT GROUP

Options Center for Independent Living’s support group for parents of children with special needs will feature several guest speakers this summer. The group meets from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. every first Monday of the month at the Bourbonnais Public Library. The agenda includes:

**May 1: “Beyond One Day at a Time: Planning For Your Future and the Lifetime of a Person With Special Needs,”** with Tom Canale, managing director of Northwestern Mutual Financial Network.

**June 5: “Shedding the Light on the Sibling Experience: Special Brothers and Sisters!”** with Joan Debelak, M.S.W. and Sheila Bauer, M.S.W. of STARnet Region VI Family Support Services.

**July 3:** Members from the **Division of Specialized Care for Children** will be available to provide information on the services they provide.

The programs are free. Child care is available, but space is limited to 20 children. Call Ann at Easter Seals at 932-0623 to register.

## Looking for a support group?

KAN-I HELP can connect you with a number of agencies that sponsor support groups for persons dealing with a variety of issues. Support group search categories include abuse

and violence, alcohol dependency, bereavement, health and mental health, parenting, family support and sexual assault and incest.



KAN-I  
HELP Information Network

Connecting the people of Kankakee and Iroquois counties with the resources they need to succeed.

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