



November 2007

Welcome to the Northfield Area Parent Communication Network's monthly e-newsletter! You are a member of a network of unbelievable parents that do make a difference and help create a healthier and safer community for all our youth.

Time To Talk

Last year, more than half of parents of teens in our national study wished they knew better what to say to their child about drugs and alcohol and that they wanted advice on how to have these conversations.

Time To Talk provides parents and caregivers the tools, tips and resources they want and need. Time To Talk is an online community, resource and toolkit to help parents connect with their kids. Visit www.timetotalk.org and learn more.

How to Tell If Your Teen Is Drinking or Using Drugs

- 1. When the Cat is Away the Mice Will Play:** Your teen insists on going to a friend's house for the night when you're going out for the evening. Once you've left, your teen returns home to your unsupervised house with a group of friends. (Watch out for: holidays, anniversaries and other special occasions.)
- 2. The Cameo Appearance:** When attending a school dance, your teen is allowed to leave the dance at any point in the evening. Why is this a problem? Many couples will take their picture at the dance to prove that they attended and then go to an empty house to party.
- 3. Wide Open Spaces:** Community festivals are not highly patrolled events, and teens can leave the premises at any time to use substances in nearby woods, parking lots, or behind nearby buildings. Also, be aware that your teen might start their night at one event, but be taken to a different party by an older student who can drive.
- 4. After-School Freedom:** After school when you are still at work, your child and his friend might congregate at your empty house and do as they please until you arrive home. A few hours are plenty of time to experiment.
- 5. The Deserted Forest:** When walking to a nearby friend's house, your teen can meet up with friends on their way in deserted or secluded areas (and use substances or engage in sexual behavior. (This can take place in broad daylight!))
- 6. School Functions Gone Wrong:** Your teen might say they're attending a school functions (such as sports games, plays, concerts or club meetings), which seems perfectly safe and reasonable, however your teen might have other plans, and can easily sneak away to go use substances in the unsupervised areas with other kids

7. Sleep-Over Sneak Outs:

Although you may be home when you teen has friends sleep-over, it's possible that while you're sound asleep your "guests" are sneaking out of your house to either walk somewhere else or be picked up in a car down the street to go to a party.

8. Turning Water into Wine:

An old trick - your teen steals alcohol from your liquor cabinet and then, if necessary, makes up the difference in the bottle's volume by adding water.

9. Not Your Usual Math Homework:

Although you might be pleased when you're teen goes to a friend's house to do homework, this may not actually be what your teen will be doing once she leaves the house. (When she leaves, check and see if she's actually carrying books.)

10. A Change of Plans:

Your teen says that he is going to a friend's house to spend the night and then ends up elsewhere at the last minute -forgetting to fill you in on his changing plans.

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After the Headlines

Community awareness was a common theme at "After the Headlines" on October 30. The event was sponsored by the Northfield School District, the Rice County Chemical Health Coalition, the Mayor's Task Force on Youth Alcohol and Drug Use, Healthy Community Initiative, and Parent Communication Network.

The event was a follow up to the many community discussions that were held this past summer. During information sessions that followed the keynote speaker, participants were provided with information and resources. Sessions were led by local law enforcement, school officials, sober school students, a substance abuse counselor and a local pastor.

Other links:

For years, parents have been berated in anti-drug ads for their ignorance about the drug-ingesting habits of their children, but a new study suggests that many parents aren't so myopic, after all.

<http://www.jointogether.org/news/research/summaries/2007/parents-not-so-ignorant.html>

As a responsible, caring parent, you want your children to make responsible choices regarding alcohol use that are consistent with your beliefs and values. But it's not a simple issue.

<http://mvparents.com/article.php?aid=43&cid=1>

Cell Phones

Let the battle begin, should teens have cell phones? Recent polls show that more than 57% of teenagers carry cell phones. Most teens have their very first cell phones by the age of 15 and in many cases 13. Cell phones can be peace of mind for parents and also be a major distraction for teens, especially young drivers.

The National Transportation Safety Board research has shown that drivers who use a wireless telephone while driving can lose situational awareness and experience "inattention blindness," decreasing their response time to that of a 70 year-old driver.

As parents, our job is to teach our modern teens to use cell phones in a practical manner and firmly establish parameters for their safe use.

Both the Northfield Middle School and High School have policies regarding cell phones. Take a moment and review the policy with your teen so both of you understands the consequences.

NMS Cell Phone Policy

Students who have cell phones are required to turn off and store phones during the school day. If they are out (visible) or heard during the school day, they are confiscated. The first offense results in a return of the phone at the end of the school day. Second violation requires a parent to pick up the phone.

NHS Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones are allowed in between classes and in the cafeteria during lunch. If students have their cell phones out during class, they are confiscated and returned the following day. Second violation, parents need to come in to retrieve it.

- School District Policy Information provided by Principals Jeff Pesta and Joel Leer

Parent Communication Network (PCN)

702 members and growing!

Thank you for support of the Parent Communication Network (PCN). This newsletter is just one of the efforts of PCN to help facilitate communication among parents and teens. Other efforts include publishing the parent-student directory each year for Northfield High School and providing resources and education for parents.

We want to do more! We want to reach as many parents as possible in the Northfield Middle and High Schools. If you know of a family that is interested in becoming a member of PCN, please let them know it only takes a few minutes to fill out the on-line form on northfieldhci.org. Also remind them of the PCN mission to foster communication among parents, help parents develop good parenting skills and prevent risky situations for all Northfield teens.
