

Make a Difference - Join Communities That Care of Lorain County

Do you get tired of seeing problems on your local landscape? Things like crime, violence, academic failure? Many of these are connected to underage substance abuse and there is something you can do about them.

You *can* make a real difference. First, join Communities That Care of Lorain County; we are a countywide community coalition working to prevent and reduce underage substance abuse. We provide information, education, advocacy and collaboration. We also have a Task Force working specifically on underage drinking issues. We need your help and voice at the local table. Our coalition is funded through the Office of National Drug Control Policy through a five-year federal grant. We also receive funding from Catholic Charities Community Services, the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services Board of Lorain County and United Way of Greater Lorain County.

We're all about planning and looking at the landscape. How can we take the pulse of our community? We conduct extensive surveys every three years; this past fall 2009, the coalition surveyed 10,883 in all 14 public school districts. Youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 told us what it's like to live in Lorain County. They told us whether they felt connected to their neighborhood, schools, families, community. They also told us about whether or not they use alcohol or drugs or engage in anti-social and violent behaviors.

Our coalition has conducted this survey every three years since 2003. That's given us time to look across the landscape for planning and to create change. The 2009 survey showed that 10th grade Lorain County youth's usage patterns have trended downward since 2006. That's good news. It's also good news that nearly 70% of all youth aren't using alcohol. Of course, some 30% are – which is why we're still working hard to prevent and reduce underage substance abuse.

Our coalition meets monthly and always needs new, fresh perspectives. Whether you are a parent, a business owner, someone working at a county agency we need your views and voice. Our meetings are usually held the first Tuesday of the month from 9-10:30 a.m. at the ADAS Board Offices, 4950 Oberlin Ave. Our Task Force, STOP (The Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking) focuses solely on underage drinking issues and we always need more at that table.

Our spring prevention campaign is *Parents Who Host Lose the Most: don't be a party to teenage drinking. It's against the law.* We're promoting that message through Public Service Announcements featuring the voices of Lorain County youth, families, coalition members and law enforcement. And Thursday, May 6 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. we'll be co-hosting with the Amherst Schools a Town Hall Café focused on the topic of underage drinking and Ohio's social host laws. This summer we'll be promoting other prevention messages. In the fall we're supporting Family Dinner Day – research shows that taking time around the dinner table every night can reduce problem behaviors. About 45% of all Lorain County youth surveyed this past fall said they eat dinner 5-7 times a week with their families. That's pretty good, but consider the national average is 60% and as youth age, that number declines. We're all busy and as kids get older they seem to spend less time at home and more with their friends – not a bad thing, but it's good to be talking with them about their activities.

So look for Communities That Care of Lorain County in your community, on the radio, in the newspaper, on Facebook and Twitter. We're here to help keep Lorain County youth and families healthy and safe. Join us. Contact us at www.ctcloraincounty.com or via phone at 440.282.9920.