



central massachusetts center for
healthycommunities

A program of LUK, inc

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Address Update:

In order to serve you better we would like to keep our list serve/database up to date. Please e-mail: candersen@cmchc.org or fax 508-438-0516 with your current contact info. **Thank You!**

Upcoming Community Trainings and Conferences

Addressing Alcohol Advertising in New England Communities: Taking Collective Action	05/03/07
The Third Annual Worcester Police Department Youth Summit	05/10/07
THE 2007 MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE ON GAMBLING PROBLEMS Fueling the Fire: Using Passion to Ignite Changes in Gambling Behavior	05/11/07
Free Regional Training presented by CADCA's National Coalition Institute: Core Competencies that Lead to Successful and Sustainable Coalitions	05/16/07 - 05/17/07
The DPH Statewide Youth Summit	06/02/07
The Seventh Annual Youth At Risk Conference	06/13/07

To find out more and to register visit
<http://www.cmchc.org/communitytrainings.html>



Letter from the Director

Spring 2007

Dear Community Partners,

When the French historian, Alexis de Tocqueville, visited the United States he captured his observations in a book called, "Democracy in America." He wrote about his fascination on how democracy was operating in this country. That was 1835. Since that time civic engagement has grown and matured into the very fabric of our existence as a nation. It is a pure expression of democracy and makes social justice possible especially with young people.

Youth have made many brilliant contributions to the concept of democracy through their practice of civic engagement. Though there are many examples I could cite, two quickly come to mind. The role of youth and young adults involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960's. This history has been thoroughly documented and celebrated in all forms of media. The second contribution is more recent and local. It is of youth and young adults in Central MA contributing to the growing field of substance abuse prevention in many arenas.

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service's most recent report on Volunteering in America, 2007, 26.4 percent of youth between the ages of 16 – 24 were involved in some form of civic engagement. The volunteer rate for all ages in MA from 1989 to 2006 has increased 10.3%, 10th largest growth in the country and the rate change for volunteers from 2002 – 2006 is 2.2% for the 2nd largest growth.

This newsletter shares two examples of how youth are being engaged in Fitchburg, Gardner and Worcester to decrease substance abuse use primarily among their peers. Space does not permit us to add the work of many other youth-oriented programs all across the region that are opening up spaces at many tables for youth to actively participate in making a difference in their own communities. While the above-cited report gives us the statistics, the two stories in this newsletter show how and where those stats come to life in our own backyards via youth and adult partnerships. Let's celebrate all youth together!!

Vicente Sanabria

Civic Engagement & Underage Drinking by José Rivera

Civic Engagement has been defined as: *Adding one's voice to community conversations. Advocacy on behalf of others. Joining in common work that promotes the well being of everyone. Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.*

In his 1/4/07 inaugural address, Governor Deval Patrick beckoned Massachusetts residents to Civic Engagement, "to extend a great movement based on shared responsibility.... I will be calling on each one of you to stay engaged, to bring forward your solutions..., to keep your eye on the higher ground we seek, and to act like this State House is your house." A similar appeal regarding underage drinking was made by the acting Surgeon General Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu on March 6, 2007 when he asked all of us "to do more to stop America's 11 million current underage drinkers from using alcohol, and to keep other young people from starting."

"Research shows," reported Dr. Moritsugu, "that young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol-related problems later in life. New research also indicates that alcohol may harm the developing adolescent brain. The availability of this research provides more reasons than ever before for parents and other adults to protect the health and safety of our nation's children. Alcohol remains the most heavily abused substance by

America's youth. This Call to Action is attempting to change the culture and attitudes toward drinking in America. We can no longer ignore what alcohol is doing to our children."

The implementation of Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA) is one resounding answer to this Call to Action. It is a community-organizing program designed to reduce adolescent access to alcohol by changing community policies and practices. It engages everyone in a community: youth, parents, retailers, law enforcement, faith organizations, and elected officials; it addresses immediate behaviors (adolescent access to alcohol) and its consequences (underage drinking); it changes norms; it changes communities. The results are invaluable. And all it asks is for people to come together

Our youth deserve the best opportunities we can give them and by joining programs like CMCA we can help improve the health of our youth and our

communities – a lofty ideal but, if we come together, an attainable goal. To echo the refrain in Governor Patrick's inaugural address: "Let's reach for that."

DPH BSAS currently provides funding and support to implement CMCA in several communities in Massachusetts. In Central MA, LUK, Inc. is implementing CMCA in Fitchburg, Gardner and, coming soon, Leominster. For more information on CMCA in Central MA, contact Marie Zbilowski at (978) 829-2257 or mzbikowski@luk.org.



Engaging Youth by Laurie Ross

The HOPE Coalition is a group with experience taking on social justice issues by engaging youth in the civic process. The HOPE Peer Leaders have a strong track record in completing social change projects. For example, since 2000, Peer Leaders have engaged over 700 young people in Worcester through surveys, focus groups, and youth speak outs to learn about the major issues facing teens in the city. They distributed their findings to local government officials and youth serving agencies. Using these data, they helped design a youth mental health program for a local youth center and the Boys and Girls Club, as well as a 15-week training program for Worcester's youth workers. Another example of the Peer Leaders' activism is in response to a series of murders of young people during the summer of 2003. HOPE Peer Leaders worked with a local artist to create a mural on youth heroes and youth victims of violence. The mural was displayed at various public events to stimulate discussion about youth violence. HOPE Peer Leaders completed a video on teen health and sexuality that has been used by area agencies with youth and adults to stimulate discussion about policy changes that are needed to address Worcester's higher than average teen pregnancy and STD rates.

HOPE is currently engaged in community-based participatory research to promote the enforcement and strengthening of Worcester's local zoning regulations to reduce store-front advertising of tobacco as well as to limit the number of tobacco vendors in neighborhoods already heavily burdened with such establishments. The Coalition peer leaders drew on their knowledge of teen culture and got the assistance from a local university in using geographical information systems to analyze and display data. The youth's research and action on this issue inspired key decision-makers, including a City Councilor, the Director of the City's Tobacco Control Program, the city's Director of Public Health, and a State Senator to embrace the youth's cause and help them forge systemic change in local tobacco control efforts.

Resource Library Updates by Faye Fulone Sweeney

Another spring has sprung and along with it new resources in our CMCHC lending library. As you know, the library and its resources are available to all Central MA patrons whether you are part of an agency, organization, school or part of the general public. Remember you can check our web library catalog at www.rchcweblibrary.org, but to give you a little "taste" of spring; here are some of our newest purchases.

On the topics of treatment and recovery we have; *Stages of Change and Addiction – the Clinical Innovators Series* (DVD and manual) and *Motivational Interviewing and Stages of Change – Clinicians Manual* (book). On the subject of conflict resolution we acquired *Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community* (book).

Also on the shelves are some new, up-to-date DVDs geared to teens on all different issues. They are: *Tobacco and Death: Perfect Together*, *Hidden Scars*, *Silent Wounds*, *Know the Score: The Dangers of Performance Enhancing Drugs*, *Raising Healthy Teens: Communications Skills*, *Stash That Cash: Budgeting, Saving and Investing for Teens*, *That's So Rude! 10 Rules of Common Courtesy*, *Top Ten Myths About Alcohol and Drugs*, *Fast Food Nation* and *Overweight in America: Why Are We Getting So Fat?*

These are just a few samples of the new materials we have been fortunate enough to get for our library. Please drop in and check them out!

