

Keeping you updated on your local health department

Ledyard Safe Teens Works with Students, Staff to Prevent Underage Drinking



Ledyard Middle School students, school staff member Liz Smith (back row, far left) and Coalition Coordinator Kerensa Mansfield (back row, far right) at the annual SERAC Youth Forum.

Youth outreach is an important part of the work we do in public health. While trying to fit in, adolescents may feel pressured to engage in risky behaviors like drinking alcohol or using tobacco. The Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition (LSTC) was founded to connect parents, schools, law enforcement and other community partners who strive to prevent underage drinking. The Ledyard Youth Group, a division of LSTC was created to engage students who choose to live a drug-free and alcohol-free lifestyle and to spread awareness of the dangers of drug use and underage drinking.

Throughout the school year, Coalition Coordinator Kerensa Mansfield and Ledyard Middle School staff member Liz Smith worked with the 7th and 8th grade youth group to empower them as leaders and role models for their peers. Each month, the group of 15 students met to

discuss and implement substance abuse prevention activities at the school including the curriculum “Keep a Clear Mind,” which encouraged students to initiate discussions about tobacco and alcohol. Based on what they learned from the curriculum, students created messages to read over the intercom during morning announcements.

The youth group also implemented the “Now Here’s What’s Real” social marketing campaign, which consists of movie-inspired posters with messages to remind teens that most of their peers don’t drink alcohol, use tobacco or smoke marijuana.

The group also conducted a “locker shock” in which they designed a magnet with a prevention message about underage drinking and put the magnets on all the lockers at the middle school.

It is anticipated that the students will continue with the Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition as they transition into high school.

The coalition’s youth group concluded this year’s activities by attending SERAC’s annual Youth Forum which was held at the Mystic Hilton. “There were some great presenters and break out sessions for the kids to participate in. The keynote speakers played a skit about bullying, which I thought was great,” said Coalition

Coordinator Kerensa Mansfield. “There was also another keynote speaker who talked about how it’s important to use your voice to be a leader. I think it was also great that the Ledyard kids got to interact with other middle schools students from across the region,” Mansfield said.

In addition to working with the middle school students, the LSTC collaborated with DARE Officer Troy Johnson to implement a prom and graduation underage drinking awareness campaign. The campaign included a mock car crash, a presentation about harmful effects of underage drinking and a video contest. Additional police officers were also on duty to conduct party patrols.

For more information about the LSTC, please visit ledyardsafeteens.org or contact Kerensa Mansfield at kmansfield@llhd.org or 860-448-4882 ext. 309.



The mock crash at Ledyard High School was presented during prom season to remind students of the consequences of underage drinking and driving.

Local Business Owners: Valuable Players in Protecting Public Health



Photo: iStock

As a local health department, it is our responsibility to protect the public's health by ensuring that licensed establishments in our District are following safe practices to prevent illness. We also have a responsibility to the owners of these establishments to communicate with them and make sure that our regulations don't contain any unnecessary obstacles for their businesses. This need for clear communication is why we hold public hearings whenever we propose to make changes to our regulations.

In April we held a public hearing regarding proposed changes to the regulation for cosmetology establishments. We were pleased to see a few business owners from local salons at the table who came to share their thoughts with us. Among them was Christen Gunderson, a Ledyard resident who was about to open her own makeup business.

She came to the hearing to voice her concerns about a section of the regulation that prohibited the use of makeup brushes unless they were single-use disposable brushes. Gunderson said this regulation was a barrier to opening her business because she had learned proper procedures for

cleaning and sanitizing makeup brushes during her training at Brio School of Cosmetology and felt that makeup artists should be able to use those procedures so they can use high quality brushes instead of disposables.

"I was taken aback and confused," Gunderson said of when she first saw the regulation. She started to wonder if the methods she was taught for sanitizing brushes were incorrect. "I contacted distributors and tried to get lab results for proof of cleanliness," she said.

Gunderson found that all of her research supported the use of the sanitizing procedures she learned. "It gave me reassurance to see that I've been doing things correctly," she said.

When the time came for the public hearing, Gunderson said she was worried that she wouldn't have the power to change anything but was surprised when she discovered that no one had brought this issue to the health department before.

"You're the professionals; you know what works," Deputy Director Steve Mansfield said to Gunderson at the public hearing.

"The people who work to revise these regulations, all of the inspectors that I work with, we don't do your work every day. So we didn't consider the fact—because no one has ever told us—that a porous brush may be able to be sanitized," Mansfield said.

"I was very pleased to see how [the hearing] was run," Gunderson said. "Everyone at Ledge Light kept in contact with me and followed up. Steve brought my case to the state level

and got the sanitizing methods approved. I am beyond satisfied," she said.

The change to the regulation now allows cosmetologists to use sanitizing methods for makeup brushes that have been approved by the brush manufacturer and the Director of Health.

"At a public hearing, what is revealed to you is more than certain technical issues from the health department's perspective; you get to learn about the real-life perspective of those people who are working in the field with customers in so many different types of facilities under different types of commercial pressure," said Director of Health Baker Salisbury.

"I think this is an instance where the process worked—where the public hearing led to a higher degree of confidence that the regulations were both appropriate and were more likely to be followed carefully," he said.

We are pleased to report that since the public hearing, Gunderson was able to open her business in late May. "It has most definitely helped my business, being able to say I've worked with Ledge Light," Gunderson said.

"In a way, this one incident was a microcosm of the larger process by which the regulatory world meets and shakes hands with the commercial, professional world because both sides share the goal of keeping people safe," Salisbury said.

Local Pharmacist Receives Good Neighbor Award



Jeffrey Messina, owner of Fort Hill Pharmacy, chose to stop selling tobacco products in 1983. He often works with local organizations to help people quit smoking.

The Groton Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention (GASP) Coalition is pleased to announce the recipient of their first ever Good Neighbor Award. The Good Neighbor Award was created to recognize a leader in the Groton community whose actions promote improved health.

This year's award goes to local pharmacist Jeffrey Messina, owner of Fort Hill Pharmacy.

Messina made a decision to stop selling tobacco products at his family's pharmacy in 1983. "There was actually a physician in town that questioned me on it and it caused me to start to think about why indeed we were doing that, so shortly thereafter, I just decided to stop," Messina said.

At many pharmacies, you can still pick-up your prescription and purchase a pack of cigarettes on the way out. "I think it's an ethical contradiction," Messina said. "They're putting their business interests before their professional obligation."

Messina said the best thing about his job is helping patients manage their health conditions. He often takes this a step

further by partnering with local organizations to provide smoking cessation resources.

"The Visiting Nurses Association had smoking cessation programs and near their Quit Day, I would go in and talk about nicotine replacement products and how they might be able to help them in their quitting efforts."

He has also partnered with Ledge Light Health District to provide resources for smoking cessation programs.

Messina said most evidence suggests that a multi-tiered approach is the most successful way to quit smoking.

"Nicotine replacement can be one arm of that. Some sort of support system—whether it's group or telephone hotline—something of that nature is helpful in getting somebody to a point where they can give it up completely."

"We are proud to present the Good Neighbor Award to Mr. Messina for choosing to keep his store tobacco-free and for all of the work he has done in our community to help people quit smoking," said GASP Coalition Coordinator Michelle Hamilton. "We thank him for his dedication to making Groton a healthier place."

The GASP Coalition is an initiative of Ledge Light Health District. For more information about the coalition, please visit gaspcoalition.org or contact Michelle Hamilton at 860-448-4882 ext. 305 or mhamilton@llhd.org.

See the next article for tips on how to quit smoking!

Carolyn's 10 Tips to Help You Quit Smoking

- 1. Get support.** Tell your friends, family and coworkers that you're trying to quit and ask them to help you stay on track or join a group of fellow smokers who are trying to quit.
- 2. Track your smoking behavior.** Keep track of when and why you smoke and what you're doing while you smoke to help you identify strategies to reduce and eliminate smoking.
- 3. Create a pros and cons list.** Identify the benefits and consequences of smoking versus quitting.
- 4. Be active.** Physical activity will boost your mood, keep your mind off smoking and improve your health.
- 5. Eat healthy.** Choosing foods that are healthy will help you look and feel better and will help prevent weight gain while you quit smoking.
- 6. Use resources.** Call the Connecticut Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit becomeanex.org for information and resources for additional support.
- 7. It's okay to ask for help.** Talk to your doctor about methods such as the patch or gum gum or prescription medication options that may be right for you.
- 8. Put your foot down.** Declare your home and car as smoke-free zones. This will make smoking less convenient.
- 9. Manage your stress.** For most people, stress is the number one reason for smoking. Explore healthier ways to manage stress such as exercising or taking up a hobby.
- 10. Make a plan.** Think about your barriers to quitting and how to overcome them. Don't give up if your first quit attempt isn't successful. The process works differently for everyone.

For more information about how to quit smoking, or to join one of our free smoking cessation programs, contact Carolyn Wilson at 860-448-4882 ext 318 or cwilson@llhd.org.

Things to Avoid this Summer: Bug Bites, Sunburn and Food Borne Illness

There are so many things to love about summer: barbecues, beach days, trips to the drive-in and other fun outdoor activities. While spending so much time outside, it's important to take precautions to keep yourself and your family safe and healthy so you can continue to enjoy everything summer has to offer.

Keep the Bugs Away!

No one likes being covered in itchy mosquito bites or finding a tick on themselves. Use a proper insect repellent to protect yourself from diseases such as West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and Lyme Disease.

Mosquitoes primarily like to be out at dusk and dawn but ticks are out all day. The CDC recommends products that contain DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus for mosquito repellent. To keep ticks away, they advise using a repellent that contains 20% DEET.

Shower as soon as possible after going indoors and check yourself for ticks. Make sure that children do the same.

What to Do if You Find a Tick: If you find a tick, remove it with tweezers or forceps. Do not apply oils, soaps, alcohol, etc. to the tick to remove it. Also, please don't use tape to 'hold' the tick in place. Using these products may delay the testing process.

After removal, clean skin area with antibiotic/antiseptic

product.

Ledge Light Health District accepts ticks for testing from citizens of our jurisdiction. Place tick in a zip baggie (with a few blades of grass if it's alive). You can bring or mail the tick with the completed tick submission form (found on our website at llhd.org) with a check for \$20 made to Ledge Light Health District, and we will forward the tick for testing at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES).

If you have any questions about tick submissions, please contact us at 860-448-4882.

Protect Your Skin from the Sun!

In addition to making you look like a cooked lobster, sunburn is incredibly uncomfortable and can be painful. It only takes 15 minutes for the sun to cause damage to your skin. Be sure to apply sunscreen (at least SPF 15) on all exposed areas of skin before you go outside. Some sunscreens are waterproof but you should re-apply sunscreen every two hours while you're outside.

Remember that sunscreen does expire. According to the CDC, sunscreen without an expiration date has a maximum shelf-life of three years but the shelf-life is shorter if it has been exposed to high temperatures.

Practice Safe Cooking!

Who doesn't love to grill in the summertime? A juicy

steak? BBQ chicken? Perhaps some succulent shrimp kebabs or summer squash? Whatever your preference, it is important to prevent cross-contamination, make sure food is cooked thoroughly, and store leftovers properly.

Keeping foods out of the "danger zone" will help to lower your risk of food borne illness. Generally, foods should be kept below 45°F or above 140°F. Although there are exceptions to this rule, reducing the amount of time food spends in the danger zone means reducing your chance of getting sick.

Raw meats, like steak, hamburger, fish, and chicken, may contain harmful bacteria. When preparing these types of foods, be sure to keep them away from other foods, like vegetables that are not going to be cooked.

Utensils and cutting boards used to prepare raw foods should not be used for cooked foods. You can make these utensils safe for use by washing them with soap and water, rinsing with warm water, then sanitizing in a food-grade bleach and water solution (follow the sanitizing instructions on the bleach bottle label).

Remember to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water and dry your hands with a paper towel after you use the restroom, before preparing foods, after handling raw meats and before eating.

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