



THE NANTUCKET ALLIANCE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION, INC.

Founded in 1995

www.asapnantucket.org

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Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol, CMCA

CMCA Co-Chairs

• Amber Cantella
• Maria Zodda

20 July 2009

Dear Parents of NHS Class of 2009,

Its summertime on Nantucket, and along with the fun and leisure should come a heightened awareness of the risks for our youth, especially those around underage drinking and high risk binge-drinking (defined as five or more drinks at one time within several hours).

Similar to many communities across the nation, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys administered to Nantucket High School (NHS) students in 2006, 2007 and 2008 tell us – our underage youth are more likely to access alcohol from social sources (parents, older siblings, other adults 21 or older) than from commercial sources.

Underage drinking is not a summer 'rite of passage'. Aside from the increased risk for sexual assault, date rape, motor vehicle accidents, drowning, and suicide for youth who consume alcohol, *the legal drinking age in Massachusetts and every other state is 21.* It is against the law to serve or provide alcohol to underage guests or to allow them to drink alcohol in your home or on other property you control. *As responsible adults, we must be more aware of the whereabouts of alcohol we purchase, and of its potential accessibility and danger to underage youth.*

The Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry published an abstract in their July 2009 issue¹ regarding a research study (1979-2006) conducted at the Washington University School of Medicine that cites substantial reductions in binge drinking since the national drinking age was set at 21 two decades ago, with one exception: college students.² The rates among male college students remained unchanged, but the rates among female collegians increased dramatically. *'Significant reductions in relative risk for binge-drinking were observed for 12- to 20-year-old males, but no changes were observed for females in this age range, and binge drinking among minority females increased.* Risk for binge drinking increased among 21- to 23-year-old women, with college women outpacing non-students in this age range. Trends also indicate that no reduction in binge drinking occurred for college men.'³

While we're concerned about the safety and well being of all our youth around the issue of underage and binge drinking, *this research causes us great concern for our NHS graduates who may be leaving Nantucket this fall for college, with special concern for our young women.* In addition, we know many college students have once again come to the island this summer to work and vacation among our youth, and this may increase the risk for binge drinking.

While most of our graduates make healthy, safe decisions, we encourage you to take the time this summer to talk with your son or daughter about the risks associated with binge drinking.

Sincerely,

Amber Cantella
President
ASAP Board

William J. Pittman
Chief of Police
Nantucket Police Department

John Buckley
Principal
Nantucket High School

Peter T. Swenson
Executive Director
Nantucket Behavioral Health Services

¹ http://journals.lww.com/jaacap/Abstract/2009/07000/Binge_Drinking_Among_Youths_and_Young_Adults_in.6.aspx

² <http://mednews.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/14292.html>

³ Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2009;48(7):692-702

The Mission of the Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention, Inc. is to provide leadership, education and support in the community for the prevention and treatment of alcoholism, addictions, substance abuse and related problems.