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Clearing the confusion around teen drug use

By Pippa Fisher

What are the roles, responsibilities, rules and consequences surrounding underage substance use? For many parents of teens there is much confusion about the roles played by police and schools. The Alcohol Drug Abuse Prevention Team of Lamorinda is hosting an evening of education from 7 to 8:30 p.m. May 7 in the Don Tatzin Community Center at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center to address these questions and others.

The discussion focusing on how parents, schools and law enforcement can partner together to reduce underage substance use and keep kids safe, will be facilitated by a panel of experts in the field including those from Lamorinda police and the Acalanes Union High School District.

Additionally the Drug Enforcement Administration will be presenting a real-life teen bedroom scenario - parents will be invited to see what can be "hidden in plain sight," as they search for the prehidden drug paraphernalia and signs of risky behavior, often overlooked by parents.

ADAPT Lamorinda Program Director Jaime Rich says that this event will provide a unique opportunity for community members to hear from representatives of the two main local entities - law enforcement and schools - that touch young people when it comes to alcohol and other drugs.

"Local parents have expressed confusion over consequences for our teens when it comes to offenses that involve alcohol and other drugs. We will outline what these consequences are when it comes to schools and the greater Lamorinda community. How do law enforcement and the schools intersect and when don't they?" says Rich, adding, "We will also share information on the roles of parents in this realm."

Rich says DEA representatives will also be sharing what they are seeing locally and beyond.

Quoting from the California Healthy Kids Survey, Rich says that 25 percent of 11th graders report currently using electronic cigarette or vaping devices, which she explains is a two-fold increase from the last CHKS data.

"Most of that use is reportedly for marijuana or THC," says Rich. "Thirty-four percent of 11th-graders report having consumed alcohol in the past 30 days (above the state average); 27 percent of 11th-graders report having used marijuana in the past 30 days; 23 percent of 11th-graders think there is no harm in smoking marijuana occasionally; 36 percent of ninth-graders and 48 percent of 11th-graders report that it is very easy to obtain alcohol." She also noted that 24 percent of ninth-graders and 49 percent of 11th-graders think it is very easy to obtain marijuana.

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