

12/4/08

Dear Editor:

The time has come when friends and family gather and remind us of the importance of the holiday season. Cookies are baking, meals are being prepared, shopping has started, and houses are lighted. The season brings special moments with loved ones, young and old, and great opportunities for deeper conversation.

Youth often look up to adults for support and direction with life-changing decisions. Studies have shown children, no matter the age, look to the significant adults in their lives to guide their decisions in regards to risk taking behaviors. Such decisions may include the choice of whether or not to use tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs. Parents, and other adults, who set clear “no tolerance” standards, will more likely have their youth say “no” when asked to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

During the holiday season, some adults also choose to celebrate with special alcohol “spirits.” I encourage them to choose to celebrate responsibly. Children often model what the adult does. Therefore, consider celebrating with care by choosing a non-alcoholic drink or limiting your drinks to one or two, and never provide alcohol to other underage youth.

Youth having clear, precise, standards their family has set benefit most when pressured about those decisions. So, while you are baking those cookies, or driving to town for shopping, talk with your youth about the risks of alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use. So, when it comes time for them to make those life-changing decisions, they will be better equipped to steer away from risky behaviors.

Have a safe and responsible holiday season!

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