

For Immediate Release
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The Holiday Season--An Opportunity for "The Talk"

Historically, "*The Talk*" has been coined the phrase for parents talking with their child about the birds and the bees. KC STAAR would like to challenge not only parents, but all community members, to have "*The Talk*" about other risky behaviors, such as alcohol abuse, with a teen this holiday season.

I am not suggesting that you approach a random teen and ask them about their sex life or if they've used drugs. What I am suggesting is this—we as a community have a responsibility to talk with teens about the negative pressures that they undoubtedly face. If we as adults can have the courage to start the conversation with a teen we know, they might have the courage to come to us when they need help. In a survey of Keokuk County parents from the fall of 2008, 72% agree that *adults not being good role models* contribute to underage drinking issues in their communities. We can no longer sit back and point the finger at someone else, blaming them for not having "*The Talk*." We all must do our part.

Believe it or not, when teens try to shy away from these conversations, they often are still observing and listening. Teens that have a parent who talks to them about risky behaviors have a much lower incidence of performing those risky behaviors. If teens know that you disapprove of alcohol use, they are more likely to remain substance-free. Adults often think that if they talk about it once, however, that they don't need to bring it up again.

In the 2008 Iowa Youth Survey of Keokuk County students, 11th graders report that only 53% of their parents would feel it is "very wrong" for that student to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor. In the same survey, 11th graders said only 40% of their neighbors would think it is very wrong. We also need to remind them constantly that alcohol use by teens is NOT acceptable—its NOT Okay. We all need to remind our teens of the expectations of being a teen in our communities—to be a good role model for younger children, to take advantage of and be engaged in educational and extracurricular activities that are offered through the community, and to make quality decisions that will lead to their ultimate success.

I challenge every adult in Keokuk County to have "*The Talk*" with an adolescent you know over the Holiday season. Let them know there is support for a troubled past, a current expectation of good behavior, and a hope for a great future. For more information, go to www.kcstaar.org.