

The Solution is in the Community

April is Alcohol Awareness Month; talk to your child about drinking

by Kelly Felton

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Have you seen a Working Together Coalition (WTC) logo at a local community event recently? The WTC is a group of dedicated community members who want to live in a community that is safe and healthy, especially for our youth.

We have community meetings within the Northland Community Schools, Pine River-Backus and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley schools. I am a Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist and the coordinator for the WTC community meetings.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Use this opportunity to have the discussions with your children about alcohol. The conversation does not need to be a formal one.

Try using "what if" questions to get the conversation started. Remind them that not all kids drink. (In fact, most choose not to.) While parents may believe that they have no impact on their children's behavior, kids consistently cite that their parents are the most powerful deterrent to drinking illegally.

The good news? Your child wants you to talk with them! That is why we also encourage parents to set clear, consistent rules about alcohol, tobacco and drug use with their children. They are listening! Having these conversations gives them the skills and knowledge on how to deal with difficult situations in the future.

If you don't have these conversations with your child, they will learn it from others, giving them mixed messages. Be certain they get the correct information and make sure it is coming from you.

The WTC will be having a Community Day Friday, 5 p.m., at the Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High School to discuss what our Coalition is doing and how we can all work together to keep our community a safe and healthy place to live. One of the first steps we need to take as a community is to start taking about underage drinking, tobacco and drug use.

What exactly is underage drinking? What types of problems do we have in our community? Where exactly are our teens getting alcohol? Please join us for these conversations; we need to know what you think!

The solution is in the community. We have everything right here; we just need to get the entire community to join in these efforts!

If you would like more information or want to get involved with the Coalition, visit www.workingtogethercoalition.org, contact me at (218) 330-8129 or e-mail to kelly@workingtogethercoalition.org.

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