

Read on for some highlights between August 1, 2012 and February 28, 2013!

## The Cupboards are Bare... and that's a good thing

Thanks to our marketing partnerships with local pharmacies, nonprofit organizations and faith communities, Merrimack residents continue to turn in unneeded prescription drugs from their medicine cabinets during Take Back events. The most recent event, held September 29<sup>th</sup>, collected 98.2 pounds of prescriptions, bringing our all-time total to 803 pounds! (That's about the size of a two-parent family with four children/teens.) We are grateful to Merrimack Police Department and federal Drug Enforcement Agency for handling the collecting and incineration of these unneeded medicines, and for helping to keep Merrimack residents safe from the harmful impact of misuse.

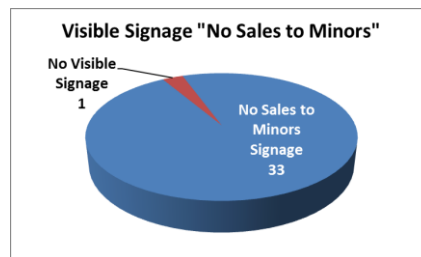
In addition, Merrimack Police Department has been working to install a permanent drop-off box in its lobby, which will enable people to dispose of their medicines safely throughout the year, as soon as they are no longer needed. Once it's available, the drop box will further help reduce accidental overdoses, misuse and the dangerous practice of prescription sharing.



**Mack the Moose and Wally the Green Monster** traded substance abuse prevention tips at the Merrimack Business Expo in the fall. Thanks to the high school SADD students for donating their time to help make this event a success! Guests enjoyed Mack bookmarks and plinko trivia games.

## "Environmental Scan" Yields Positive Results

One strategy to reduce alcohol misuse among youth is to change the way that alcohol is promoted in stores and restaurants that can be attractive to underage people or that promotes excessive consumption. Merrimack Safeguard, with the help of a nursing student at Rivier University, conducted an Environmental Scan in December 2012. We were able to collect data on 34 of the 43 liquor licensees in Merrimack with promising results. First, all but one (96%) had visible signs posted indicating they would not sell to minors. In addition, 81% of convenience and grocery stores that sell beer and wine kept the alcohol in a separate cooler from soda, juice and water. Further, 84% of alcohol selling establishments did not have product placement that encouraged binge drinking (such as ping pong balls and large red cups sold beside beer). Finally, 60% of liquor licensees did not have alcohol advertisements visible from outside of their establishment.



A follow up letter was sent to liquor retailers commending those that were following national best practices to reduce underage drinking, and encouraging others to consider the potential unintended consequences some signage

and product placement can pose to young people. We hope to conduct another Scan later this year to see how we're doing getting our message out.

## Red Ribbon Tulips

*Coming to a garden near you!*

Thanks to a team of Middle and High School student volunteers, and Officers Tom Prentice and Mike Murray, several public gardens will soon be sporting a total of 500 new red tulips planted during Red Ribbon Week. If you see them in bloom, please take a pic and send it to [chair@merrimacksafeguard.org](mailto:chair@merrimacksafeguard.org).

- Merrimack Town Hall
- Merrimack Public Library
- John O'Leary Adult Community Center
- Merrimack Police Department
- Hospice House
- Masticola, Reeds Ferry and Thornton's Ferry Schools
- Upper Elementary, Middle School and High Schools

## Making Sense of Numbers with NH Center for Excellence

We've been tracking data for several months, and now with the help of evaluators Katy Shea and Sarah Short from the NH Center for Excellence, we'll be able to tell our story and share our progress with quality data. All of our efforts have thus far been around reducing youth substance use and reducing misuse of prescription drugs. Soon we'll be able to measure the impact of having a juvenile officer in our Middle School as well as any reduction in rates of 30-day use among Middle and High School students.



For example, in 2009, 57.9% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders said it was wrong or very wrong if someone their age drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor regularly. However, in 2011, that number jumped to 66.5% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, a significant improvement reflecting the youth population that benefited from having Officer Prentice on site during their Middle School years. We look forward to learning more from our evaluation team in the coming months.

## It's Never Too Early to Start a Conversation

Our regional partner Beyond Influence ([www.beyondinfluence.org](http://www.beyondinfluence.org)) recently created *Age-Appropriate Conversations About Substance Abuse*, a pamphlet featuring key points to cover in discussions with your children.

**PRESCHOOL:** Kids who wear a bike helmet are less likely to develop a substance abuse problem; start conversations about safety now!

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:** Discuss how anything you put in your body that is not food, water, juice, or medications prescribed by a doctor can be extremely harmful. Drug use can: Interfere with the way our bodies work; Cause sickness or death; Become a very bad habit that is hard to stop. Praise your children for taking good care of their bodies.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL:** Students this age may now see older students using substances and may think they are cool and self-assured. As a result, your children may be tempted to try drugs too. Help your children make good choices during this critical phase by: Ensuring they are well-versed in the reasons to avoid alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; Volunteering for activities where you can observe their behavior; Respecting their need to feel independent; Getting acquainted with their friends and friends' parents; Learning about the habits of your child, their friends, and their friends' parents.

## Areas where we need specific expertise...

Assistance is needed in these areas: How can you help?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coalition and partnership development</li><li>• Community needs and resource assessment</li><li>• Leadership development</li><li>• Cultural competency</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal and outcome development and assessment</li><li>• Developing substance abuse prevention initiatives</li><li>• Advocacy and policy development</li></ul> |
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## Thank you for all that you do to help Merrimack youth and families make positive choices!

For more information, please contact

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NH Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment's

## Alcohol and Other Drug Policy Recommendations for Schools

After months of surveys, reviewing policies of neighboring communities and states, and hosting meetings, the Commission's Prevention Task Force has published a model school policy for assisting students struggling with alcohol and other drug issues. The full report is available at: <http://nhcenterforexcellence.org/education>

Merrimack Safeguard intends to review this document in the coming months to identify ways that our local policies could be adapted to reflect current best practices.



## Team from Merrimack High School Presents On Challenge Day

Merrimack Safeguard members were treated to a dynamic and heartfelt presentation by a group of teens and adult advisors that *attended Challenge Day* on November 15<sup>th</sup> at Merrimack High School. A school-climate building activity for 100 students per day, the main tenets are "Notice—Choose—Act" along with a Cross the Line activity which breaks down a wide array of barriers among participating students and student and adult volunteers. This year's student leaders recommended offering the program to the entire freshman class each year. MSAFE members look forward to hearing more about their progress moving forward with this powerful community-building experience.

## Our monthly meetings average

12 members in attendance, and we can always use more help! Please check out our website at [www.merrimacksafeguard.org](http://www.merrimacksafeguard.org) for details. **A special thank you to Lisa Mooney for designing our new website!**