

Read on for some highlights between August 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014!



The Magic Number is **1156**

Any guesses to the significance of 1156? That's the number of pounds of unneeded medication that has been turned in during the Merrimack Police and the Drug Enforcement Administration's twice-yearly Take Back Events since 2010! In addition, local residents are leaving an average of 8.6 pounds every week in the new Prescription Drop Box at Merrimack Police Department.

Given that one in five teens nationally report misusing prescription drugs, it is critically important that parents and grandparents clear out unneeded medication and secure their regular prescriptions safely. Lock Boxes that can be affixed to a wall or drawer are available locally and online for around \$30. Get yours today!

Age of Onset Shows Significant Improvement

One of the indicators of a community's health is the age in which children begin to experiment with alcohol by drinking more than a few sips at a religious gathering. When Merrimack surveyed its high school students in 2009 through the nationally-known *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 17.1% of 9th and 10th graders reported having their first drink of alcohol *before age 13*. This data point was alarming to Merrimack Safeguard because it meant that a significant number of our children – most likely in 7th grade or younger – were drinking alcohol. With many of our resources over the last few years concentrated on helping Middle School youth make positive choices, we are proud to report that number was reduced to 10.2% representing a statistically significant ($p=0.01$) decrease in the age of onset among 9th and 10th graders. That equates to 104 children in 2009 down to 62 children in 2013. Merrimack Safeguard is proud of our parents, students, Middle School faculty, staff and all of our community partners for helping our children make safe and healthy choices related to alcohol use.

Coalition Effectiveness Measured by NH National Guard Counter-Drug Task Force

Merrimack Safeguard partnered with the NH National Guard Counter-Drug Task Force in 2012 and again in 2013 to conduct the Kaizen Survey to help assess our overall effectiveness engaging coalition members. The Survey measures coalition processes such as how we make decisions, does everyone understand our goals and activities, do people feel like their voice is heard and that they have input into decisions.

In total, we increased our "green" (favorable) responses in six areas, from 21 to 27, although some members reported that they had not participated in our evaluation plan and questioned the utility of our Action Plan. Feedback from both iterations of the Kaizen Survey has been utilized to strengthen our coalition capacity. We look forward to completing the survey again in late fall 2014.

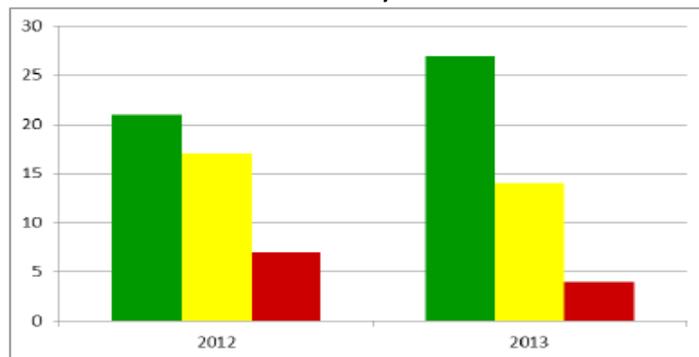
Parent Survey Shows Positive Benefits

Through Community Health Institute, we conducted a Parent Survey in January to gauge Middle School parents' perceptions of underage drinking and drug use as well as the impact of having a Juvenile Officer, Detective Tom Prentice on site. Almost all (95.6%) indicated that having Detective Prentice at the Middle School adds to their feeling that their child(ren) are safe while at school. In addition, 67% indicated that he had provided their child, their family, or their child's peers with support that helped make positive decisions.

Parents also indicated that Detective Prentice provided extra supervision in the cafeteria, gymnasium, hallways and exterior of building (74.3% of respondents), support to the administration in explaining bullying and other child safety laws (65.5%), and teaching classes about substance abuse to health students (60.2%).



Kaizen Survey Results



Reapplication Grant Submitted for Next 5 Years

Merrimack Safeguard is pleased to announce that our grant application to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration for 5 more years of funding was submitted by the deadline. We will find out in late August whether we qualify for another \$500,000 award. Multiple partners helped design our Logic Model and Action Plan for the next phase of our work, and several also provided edits and other support. Thanks so much! Read on for highlights for the next 5 years.



Conference Showcases Creative Ideas

Thornton's Ferry Assistant Principal Julie DeLuca and Project Director Betsy Houde spent four days in Washington, DC at the CADCA National Forum in February.

The team was able to learn about initiatives happening all over the country, and identify those for consideration in Merrimack. Given that our activities need to be based on data, concerns about high rates of suicidal thoughts were the main focus. We are concerned that only 37.2% of youth feel that they matter to the community (state 46.5%). In addition, there is a high level of suicidal ideation among 9th graders, which has risen from 15.4% in 2009 to 22.2% in 2013. Further, 12th graders considering suicide almost doubled from 8.9% to 16% during the same time frame (18.3% overall/NH 15.4%). This also prompts questions about students taking unsafe risks. For example, 20% of high school students rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking, and 24.8% of students who had sex used alcohol or other drugs before the last time, which is higher than the state average of 20.3%. This is a great time to get involved to help our youth make positive choices and to know we care!

Sector Partners are Committed

The 12 partners listed below have signed on to lend their support and expertise within their sector for the next five years. Special thanks to:

Sector	Partner
Youth	Madison Dyer
Parent	Trisha Swonger
Business	Andrew Schneider
Media	Nancy Rose
School	Dr. Mark McLaughlin
Youth-Serving Org.	Joe Manzoli
Law Enforcement	Chief Mark Doyle
Religious/Fraternal	Rev. Sharon Lovejoy
Civic/Volunteer	Kay Murphy
Healthcare	Dr. Debra Margolis
State/local Gov't	Beverly Doolan
Other organizations involved in reducing substance abuse	Barbara Publicover

All are welcome to attend our meetings. Please consider joining us – typically on the first Thursday of every month – from 6:00pm to 7:30pm. St. James UMC, Daniel Webster Highway, Exit 12, across from the Homestead.

For more information, contact
Detective Tom Prentice at
tprentice@merrimacknh.gov

Join Our *Be Responsible, Merrimack!* Campaign

With all of the health and safety messages out there about drinking responsibly, Merrimack Safeguard wants to help the community define what it actually means to be responsible. From our youngest student bystanders witnessing bullying on the playground to parents that might over-indulge because they secured a designated driver, we want to start a community conversation about what it really means to be a responsible member of the Merrimack community. While data shows that fewer youth are starting to drink alcohol before age 13, we are concerned that 38.9% of 9th and 10th graders that reported 30-day alcohol use *obtained it by someone giving it to them!* That's higher than the state average! Do we really want other teens or adults deciding what's right for our children?



In January, 122 Middle School parents completed a survey and 31.3% of parents indicated that youth under 18 who do not drink alcohol at parties feel left out. In addition when asked how they limit their teens' access to alcohol, 52.2% report that they keep track of their alcohol at home to make sure no one has taken any and 48.7% instruct their children not to take any. At the same time, only 32.4% of middle school youth think it would be difficult to take alcohol from home without their parents knowing, while the remaining 67.6% believe that it would be somewhat difficult or easy (Youth and Young Adult Adapted Survey 2013). Only 21.7% of parents lock their alcohol or don't keep any in the home (Parent Survey 2014). Finally, 12.9% of parents know adults in the community who hosted parties where alcohol was available or served to underage youth. A little over one quarter (27.7%) indicated that they would allow some drinking if a family member or parent was present. This community culture is exemplified by the fact that 91.2% of the same parents realize Merrimack has a Social Host law and that it is against the law to host a party where minors consume alcohol.

Parent communication around expectations also relaxes in Merrimack as youth get older. For example, 1.9% of Middle School students report using prescription drugs without a prescription in the past 30 days. Among high school students past 30-day use of prescription drugs use was 3.7% among 9th graders, 8.1% among 10th graders, 12.6% among 11th graders and 16.4% among 12th graders. However, that number increases to 9.9% for lifetime use for 9th graders, 17.2% for 10th graders, 23.2% for 11th graders, and 31.8% for 12th graders (State 21.0%). Please join us in the coming year to help promote responsibility among the entire community.

Thank you for all that you do to help Merrimack youth and families make positive choices!