

# TOMORROW'S NEWS

December 2011

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## Holiday Hangover

The holidays are here. Hot chocolate, holiday concerts, shopping, and decorations galore. Office holiday parties, family functions, and gatherings with friends overpopulate your calendar. Pictures with Santa or at the local pub might begin to show up in your google profile, LinkedIn, and Facebook accounts. While the holidays are a grand time of spreading cheer, please remember that your holiday festivities have an impact on people who most look up to you: your children. Social networking sites and even pictures saved to your phones are likely to be seen by young and impressionable eyes.

Surveys still report parents as the number one influencing agent in their child's life. Remember to wisely wield your influence to steer youth away from alcohol and other drugs. These substances absorbed by a developing mind can lead to health complications, dependence, and addiction. The holidays also afford families more time to spend together. So go ahead and grab your Snuggie and cocoa and have a heart to heart conversation with your child about abstaining from drugs.



### UMA Risky Business:

According to the Pennsylvania Youth Survey taken during the 2009-2010 school year, 833 UMA students reported "great risk" of harm:

	6th	8th	10th	12th
drinking alcohol regularly	45%	43%	35%	35%
smoking cigarettes regularly	65%	71%	76%	72%
trying marijuana once or twice	36%	38%	27%	25%



# Mom's Away Message Said What?!

Just when you think you've graduated high school and left all the drama behind, you realize that the social pressures have just shifted into adulthood. Have you ever been coerced into having "Happy Hour" drinks with your coworkers after lecturing your son or daughter about peer pressure? Have you ever decided that you were OK to drive after consuming two or three beers after watching your son or daughter graduate from the DARE program? Have you ever remained silent knowing a neighbor was smoking marijuana on a regular basis around their elementary school age children? Pressure to follow the crowd is still a reality even as an adult. Are you keen and strong enough to identify it and make your own healthy and safe choices?

Peer pressure can be a negative thing when coerced to do something unhealthy, illegal, or unwise, but pressure can also help others make healthier choices. When your son or

daughter comes home crying that all their friends' dads volunteer at the school, then you feel some obligation to serve, too, right? Have you ever dropped your child off at their sports competition, while passing other parents setting up camp to cheer their son or daughter on? This sighting might clear up your schedule for your child.

Similarly, if you made it the norm to call the parents of your child's friends whenever they set up outings, then communication would become the norm. Have you considered calling to see if there is a firearm in the home or if their liquor and medicine cabinet is locked? It may be unpopular, but positive peer pressure can remind and encourage adults to care about the right things to keep their child healthy and safe. Be a responsible parent by modeling healthy, safe, and right choices. Remember, these might be the same choices your child will mimic when they become an adult.

## **"Expectations for First Year College Students" Workshop**

**Thursday, January  
26th, 2011  
7-8:30pm  
UMA High School  
LGI Room**

Register by emailing  
[pbriley@umasd.org](mailto:pbriley@umasd.org).

# Friends Help Friends Stay Alive



It's 1AM and you are at your friend's house. She invited you to a small gathering where an additional 40 people decided included themselves, too. The party was great- good music, great friends, and your crush showed up, too! Your friend's parents went away on vacation so no lectures or rules to worry about- leaving you free to flirt. You are not sure who opened the first bottle of liquor, but the liquor cabinet has ten bottles less of rum, vodka, and gin. This is the party everyone will be talking about the whole marking period! As the first car begins to leave the house, they quietly mention checking the upstairs bathroom. Thinking this was odd, you look puzzled and asked why- this was not your house. Did they think you live here? They replied, she's in there, half naked and unresponsive, in a pool of her own vomit. Who?....she?....oh my gosh, my friend!

What would you do in this situation? Would you investigate about your friend? Would you grab your keys and take off? Would you stop the party? Would you ask friends for help? Would you call your parents? What exactly would you do? She is not moving and her breathing is almost negligible.

Traditionally, teens in this situation might abandon their friend for fear of the police charges

for underage drinking. Citations on your record do not make a great opening statement to college admissions officers. And even worse, long and drawn out explanations to your parents who thought you were sleeping over another friend's house would be absolutely tortuous! So what do you do? What choice do you make?

Pennsylvania has a new law that might make the choice to help a friend in need a little bit easier. It is called the Good Samaritan Law. This law gives immunity to underage drinkers who call 911 to get medical attention for another. This law is not making underage drinking permissible, but it intends to save lives. What matters is getting others the medical attention they need, because it might save their life! The details of the law outline that the caller must provide his or her name to the 911 operator AND remain with the person until paramedics arrive. The law eliminates a disincentive for underage drinkers to call for help, as recorded in the September 2011 newsletter of Pennsylvania State Representative Greg Vitali (District 166).

So next time you find yourself with a friend who could use some help, make the call. Call 911 and get your friend the medical help that could salvage their life without destroying your own.

## Camp on the Sidewalk, Hitchhike, or Call Mom?!

The definition of defeat to a teenager is calling home for help. This seems counterintuitive to adults because we know that our sole desire is to see our children grow up to be healthy, safe, and productive members of society. A parent's main goal is to help, but is viewed as the exact opposite by the average teen. Remember when your child felt rewarded by a surprise visit to their classroom? Do you remember when it was not a big deal to drop off your child in your lemon right in front of the school? If you ask most teens, that would be social suicide.

So in an effort to help teens view parents as someone that is available to offer timely and needed help comes the program "Make the Call, Take the Call". "This is a great way to keep teens in our community safe." commented Risa Ferman, District Attorney for Montgomery County. The purpose of the campaign is to encourage parents to talk with their teens to make a plan if they find themselves in a dangerous situation. Do not assume that your child just knows that you would come and pick them up at 2 AM. Do not assume that your child just knows that you value their safety over your sleep.

Let your son or daughter know what the plan is and make it "cool" for them to come to you with concerns. Set up a code word or phrase that allows your child to make a discreet exit from a dangerous situation without losing face with their friends. For instance, a code could be "Your uncle is here for a visit" or "Have you checked the crock pot?"

Remind your son or daughter that your desire is to make sure they are safe. Remind them that if they make the call- you will take it no matter what the hour, weather, or your mood. Have this conversation today!

Kathryn Ashbridge  
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Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow (CAST) is a risk and protective factor focused approach to reducing problem behaviors in youth through community mobilization, awareness, and planning. Upper Merion Area residents work together with representatives from all sectors of the community to decrease and prevent substance abuse and violence. The risk factors for the UMA are lack of commitment to school, family management, and community laws and norms favorable toward drugs and alcohol. For the next two years, CAST will focus our efforts on decreasing these risk factors and increasing the protective factors that already exist.

*Today is the day we make choices about tomorrow!*