

Feb. 24, 2009

SCHOOL MATTERS

Collaborative works to stop student drug abuse

The Palo Alto Drug and Alcohol Collaborative is composed of a dozen groups whose purpose is to reduce alcohol and drug use among Palo Alto's youths. If you visit its Web site at www.padacc.org/test_index.html, you will see that everyone from staff of the Stanford Hospital emergency room to the Palo Alto Unified School District belongs to this collaborative.

The collaborative has been meeting monthly, with members working together to tackle drug and alcohol abuse since 2002.

The collaborative's latest project is a survey called "The Palo Alto Reality Check (PARC)," which was given to every middle and high school child in the Palo Alto Unified School District in October 2008. Results of the survey will be revealed Monday in the district's board room, 25 Churchill Ave. The event is called "Hearing from our teens: Student attitudes and experiences regarding alcohol, marijuana and bullying."

The survey was put together by local experts to address concerns relevant to



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Palo Alto, and was anonymously and confidentially taken by 5,262 Palo Alto middle and high school students. The event begins with refreshments at 6:30 p.m., continues with a presentation of the survey results, and includes time afterward to talk with local experts in the field.

Past activities of the Palo Alto Drug and Alcohol Collaborative have included research into programs that, through surveys at schools, find and encourage positive behavior; action on the "social host" ordinance that passed in November 2007; and ongoing education of the community.

In September, the collaborative sponsors high-profile speakers on various topics of interest to the community who lecture in the schools during the day and address the public at night. September's speaker was a nationally recognized expert on media literacy, Dr. Peter DeBenedictis. The collaborative's coordinator is Karin Bloom, who can be reached at Karin@foreverbloom.us.

While Monday's program is of interest to all parents and community members,

there are programs today and Wednesday of interest to smaller groups. Tonight at 7 o'clock, "Be comfortable in your genes," a panel on eating disorders, will convene at the Gunn High School library. Speakers will be Carol Dietrich, from El Camino Hospital's eating disorders program; Nan Dellheim, co-author of "How I Look Journal" (www.howilookjournal.com); and Gunn teacher Kristina Gossard. Gunn High School is at 780 Arastradero Road.

On Wednesday, Tuck Geerds will give a talk called "Academics and learning differences" at Nixon Elementary School following the PTA Council general meeting at 7 p.m. There will be simultaneous Spanish translation, and free on-site child care can be reserved by calling Carrie Manley at 650-269-6656. All programs are free and open to the public.

School Matters is happy to hear your feedback. Please e-mail any comments to schoolmatters@paloaltopta.org to reach Preeva Tramiel, who is writing the column this year. Look on the PTA Council Web site, www.paloaltopta.org, and pull down the leftmost menu, and click on "school matters" to see submission guidelines for press releases.