

Students sound off on substance abuse

ITAC- It Takes a Community Drug and Alcohol Prevention Coalition– has been collecting data in the community through various survey methods- including focus groups and interviewing youth to continue to guide our prevention efforts in the community.

A focus group is a representative sample of a target audience; for ITAC, it is a small group of youth or adults who have volunteered to answer questions and share opinions, values or knowledge in a moderated setting. Focus groups can provide insights into community issues, behaviors, and beliefs. ITAC will be recruiting students and adults to participate in upcoming focus groups.

Interviewing youth is an acceptable method to gain data regarding youth beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding substance use. ITAC's mission is "to increase awareness of substance use within our community... utilizing data to drive prevention efforts, promote education, and provide access to resources."

Students at Iroquois High school were asked to share their opinion regarding substance use. Here is a sampling of youth interviews shared by an Iroquois journalism student Mikayla Durkin, a senior at Iroquois High School:

Freshman, age 14: "I see more high schoolers doing drugs. People nowadays think consuming substances makes you look cooler and possibly more popular. In the middle school, it will make you look bad. These substances students are consuming are causing a lack of concentration and it is affecting their schoolwork."

Sophomore, age 15: "Drugs are pointless as they don't really have any positive effects on the body. They may make you feel good for the smallest amount of time, but the aftereffect is rough and can cause addiction. I have no experience with drugs and neither do any of my friends."

Junior, age 16: "Almost every teen has tried substances. At the beginning it is a un-experience during the high, but as time passes the effects of the substance hits you and you feel like you're crashing down."

Senior, age 17: "I feel as though alcohol is very accessible to teens now. With several teens running fake identification businesses and adults supplying their thirst, it's not hard to find someone who can get their hands on alcohol."

Mikayla's take-a-way from interviewing students is summed up: All in all, the future lies in

the hands of the students. ITAC will pursue their mission of educating the community on the effects of drug and alcohol consumption among youth.

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