

# Family Connections

Happy Hanukah!

Merry Christmas!

Happy Kwanza!

Happy New Year!

Volume 1, Issue 8

December, 2008

## Recovery through the Holidays

Everywhere you look there are advertisements suggesting that the only way to get through the holidays is by drinking. Companies are advertising new drink combinations "just for the holidays." Billboards suggest a "good time" with drink in hand. If you are a family struggling with addiction, getting through the holidays may be filled with anxiety. Looking ahead to a two-week break from school and New Year's Eve can feel frightening when you know your teen is an addict. This article will outline some strategies for parents to help their teens sustain their recovery during the holidays.

Parents should sit down with their teens now and begin to talk about what is ahead. Parents need to be willing to **listen** to their teens talk about the struggle their teen feels. Talking about the struggle does not mean your teen is going to relapse. It means he/she is actively processing how to make this new lifestyle fit. **Reflect** with them on where they were last year at this time. **Remind** them that drinking and using lead to many negative consequences and relationships. **Strategize** with them about ways to get through the holidays. Either **review or establish** expectations with

your teen that support an alcohol and drug free way of life. **Make** a gratitude list that appreciates life's gifts including the gift of recovery.

Maintain safety at home by pledging to have an alcohol free environment. Decide the whole family, including relatives and friends, will not use alcohol or other drugs in your house during the holidays. Consider hosting a New Year's Eve party at your house, where you can control what happens. It may feel like a potentially long sleepless night with teens in your home into the wee hours, but the long-term benefit may outweigh the short-term consequence.

If there is a plan to attend holiday parties outside the home, discuss different possible scenarios. Call the party host ahead of time and ask about whether alcohol will be served. Strategize with your teen and other family members about how to handle the presence of alcohol. This can work if the family is attending together or if your teen is attending a party alone. Establish a code word that indicates that it is time to leave a party or the teen wants to be picked up. If your teen is attending a party alone, call the other



teen's parents to see if they will be home. Ask your teen who will be at the party. Let your teen know that you will follow-up with him/her during the night to make sure everything is all right. Let them know that you will pick them up no matter what.

Perhaps as a family you can decide to plan an alternative family activity rather than attend a party with alcohol. Go to museums or concerts. Consider giving your teen tickets for a concert or a sporting event for Christmas. Identify sober socials through Families Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous or other support groups. Go bowling, sledding, ice skating or take a walk to look at Christmas lights. Structure the school break to minimize or eliminate the times your teen will be alone.

Seek or maintain outside support for your teen and your family during the holidays. Many support groups like Families Anonymous,

### Quote of the Month:

Reflect on your present blessings, of which every man has many; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.

-Charles Dickens

### Inside this issue:

Recovery through the holidays **1**

Considering hosting a New Year's Eve party? **2**

Family Activities **3**

Monitoring your teen's electronic activity **3**



## Recovery through the Holidays continued...

Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12 step groups hold marathon meetings during the holidays. Families can benefit from going to meetings with their teen. Make contact with your teen's treatment program or current counselor and ask if they are hosting activities or know of activities that would be safe for your teen. If you need guidance in

helping your family make a plan, ask the counselor for assistance.

During the coming weeks, believe that your teen is also interested in staying sober during the holidays. Avoid unfounded accusations. Stay in constant communication with your teen. Supporting your teen through the holi-

days is another crossroad along the journey of recovery.

A special thank you to Mary Roufa from Rosecrance and Eric Foster and Dana Aikens from South Suburban Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse for contributing to this article.

**The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that 21-year-old minimum age drinking laws have prevented an estimated 4,441 drunk driving deaths in the last five years alone.**

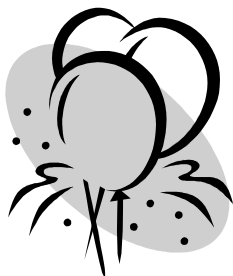
## Thoughts on Hosting a New Year Eve's Party

Considering hosting a New Year's Eve party at your home for your teen and his/her friends? Some thoughtful planning and willingness to be visible and actively chaperone can lead to a successful evening. Here are some things to think about:

- Decide on a guest list and know who's invited. Talk to your teen about who and how many friends are welcome. Be clear that no additional guests will be allowed in the house.
- Agree to rules with your teen and write them down, so you are both clear about what you have agreed to.
- Establish a party start and end time.
- Split the workload for getting ready with your teen. You shouldn't be doing all the work.
- Obtain the parent's phone numbers of the guests and let your teen know that you will call parents to come pick up

the teens if someone breaks the alcohol/illegal substance rule or there are other problems.

- Party decorations do not have to be elaborate. Paper plates and cups, streamers and noise makers can go along way.
- One teen suggested posting a sign on the front door that says, "No drinking or smoking will be tolerated."
- Greet the guests with your teen and introduce yourself.
- Keep plenty of food and drinks on hand. One website suggested a bag of chips for every two teens. Also provide healthy options. Keep the cooler filled with drinks, including soda, juice, water.
- Be visible at the party. Walk through at least every 15 minutes.
- Enlist the help of other adults to help you chaperone. Make sure the adults are willing to abide by the no smoking, alcohol or other drugs rule.
- Allow for loud music and TV watching and video games. Have ideas for games. Charades is an inexpensive fun activity. There are games currently on the market that are based on popular culture trivia.
- Don't allow kids to come and go. If kids are going to do something illegal, they will leave and engage in the illegal activity and come back. Tell kids once they leave they cannot come back.
- Establish the physical boundaries of the party and don't allow kids to go in other parts of the house. Count heads as you walk through the party.
- Praise your teen at the end of the party for its success. Reflect on the things that went well and the things you both would change the next time.



## Family Activities-(Not an exhaustive list, but a place to start.)

### Chicago

- Adler Planetarium—Free day December 15 and 22
- Shedd Aquarium—Residents of Chicago get a 25% discount every day.
- Museum of Science and Industry—Free Days December 24 and 31.
- Millennium Park—Free everyday. Free skating with small rental fee for skates.
- DuSable Museum of African American History—Sundays are free.

### Springfield

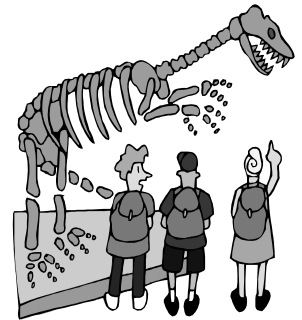
- First Night Springfield, December 31st starting at 1pm. An alcohol free event starting in downtown Springfield.
- Abraham Lincoln Museum—1/2 off adult admission now through January 31st. [www.alplm.com](http://www.alplm.com).
- Christmas with the Lincolns—Free admission. See the Lincoln home decorated for Christmas now through January 7th. [www.nps.gov/liho](http://www.nps.gov/liho)

### Peoria

- East Peoria Festival of Lights—A two mile drive through electric park. \$10 per car. [www.cityofeastpeoria.com](http://www.cityofeastpeoria.com)
- Poinsettia Show at the Conservatory, Luthy Botanical Gardens—minimal fee [www.peoriaparks.org](http://www.peoriaparks.org).
- Festival 56 presents a Christmas Carol—\$15 admission [www.festival56.com](http://www.festival56.com)

### Bloomington/Normal

- Victorian Christmas Tours—Free Admission. Wednesday—Sunday 9-4 through December 31. [www.daviddavismansion.org](http://www.daviddavismansion.org).
- 12 Days of Christmas in Uptown Normal—[www.uptownnormal.com](http://www.uptownnormal.com)



## Monitoring your Teen's Electronic Activity

Wondering how to pay attention to your teen's use of electronic devices? Here are some suggestions:

- Keep the computer in a central place in the house with the screen facing into the room.
- Limit your teen's time online.
- Listen to the songs on their MP3 players.
- Visit your teen's Web site or personal blog.
- Go to a social networking site like Facebook , My Space or Beboo and type
- Go to a video sharing website like YouTube, Google , My Space or Facebook and type in "marijuana" and watch what videos are available for anyone to view. The top 10 marijuana-related videos have almost 30 million views.
- Interested in more information go to [www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/Teens-Tech-Guide.pdf](http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/Teens-Tech-Guide.pdf).
- Parents can find out

in your teen's high school. Read what teens are writing about.

what websites their teens have visited recently. In most browsers, i.e. Internet Explorer, there is an arrow to the right of the Web address bar, where you type in the web page. Clicking on that arrow allows you to see, and click on, the most recent websites visited. See [www2.jsonline.com/news/apr99/0425net.asp](http://www2.jsonline.com/news/apr99/0425net.asp) for other ways to track where your family has been online.

Almost two thirds of parents monitor the websites their teens visit, according to a survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2005).

**Illinois Federation of Families**

21555 Gelden Rd.  
Lake Villa, IL 60046

Phone: 847-265-0500  
Fax: 847-265-0501

---

Visit Us on the Web at  
[www.iffcmh.net](http://www.iffcmh.net)

Fill out the family survey at  
[www.Illinoistreatmentworks.org](http://www.Illinoistreatmentworks.org)

---

Wondering how to receive this  
Newsletter?  
Contact Stephanie at  
[sfrankIFF@yahoo.com](mailto:sfrankIFF@yahoo.com).

**Supporting Families  
Across Illinois**



The Illinois Federation of Families is an advocacy organization that helps families and children with mental health needs seek a better quality of life.