



*Working for a Healthier
Community*

The Valley Prevention News

June 2016

Addiction

**As a community suffering with addiction issues, we are not alone.
Neither are those personally struggling with addiction.**

*Recovery
is a process.
It takes time.
It takes patience.
It takes everything
you've got...*

There is wide agreement that abstinence from alcohol and other drugs of addiction is a basic part of recovery. But there is much more involved in healing the mind, the body, and the spirit, and individuals vary in the precise path they take in their recovery journeys. Recovery is a lifelong process, and it can take a number of attempts to gain a secure foothold in sobriety—for many people, early efforts can seem like one relapse after another until they find their way into long-term recovery. For this reason, researchers often describe addiction as “a disease of the brain characterized by relapse”.

*-Robert Purvis, Executive
Director of the Turning Point
Center of Central Vermont.*

According to a January 2016 report from Harvard Medical School Center for Primary Care, “23 million Americans suffer from a substance abuse disorder. To put that into perspective, 29 million Americans suffer from diabetes. Both are chronic, potentially fatal diseases that need regular medical monitoring and management, and both can often be prevented through appropriate interventions.” Substance abuse does not discriminate. It is not a personal failure or weakness. People from all backgrounds, at any income, educational background, or level of society can get an addiction. It can happen at any age, but it usually starts when a person is young.

How does drug addiction happen? Substance use starts out because it is pleasurable or helps avoid pain. **What is Addiction?** According to the National Institute of Health, when a drug user cannot stop using a drug even if he/she wants to, it is called addiction. The urge is too strong to control, even if the user knows the drug is causing harm. When people start taking drugs, they do not plan to get addicted. They like how the drug makes them feel. They believe they can control how much and how often they take the drug. However, drugs change the brain. Drug users start to need the drug just to feel normal or avoid going into withdrawal. That is addiction, and it can quickly take over a person's life. Addiction can become more important than the need to eat or sleep. The urge to obtain and use the drug can fill every moment of a person's life. The addiction replaces all the things the person used to enjoy. A person who is addicted might do almost anything—lying, stealing, or hurting people—in order to keep taking the drug. Addiction is a brain disease. Drugs change how the brain works. These brain changes can last for a long time. They can cause problems like mood swings, memory loss, even trouble thinking and making decisions.

Substance abuse has several characteristics: tolerance of the substance, symptoms of withdrawal when use is stopped, the substance is used more than intended, unsuccessful attempts to quit, significant time spent in procurement and substance use, less involvement in social activities that once gave the person pleasure, continued use of the substance regardless of health effects, increasing interpersonal problems with friends and family, cravings, and increasing failure to live up to one's obligations at home or work.

Just as there are treatment and management options for other chronic diseases, there are ways of managing substance abuse. Treatment for substance abuse may include medication and lifestyle changes. Services are available to successfully support substance abuse treatment and ongoing support for recovery. If you think you or someone in your family has a substance abuse disorder, talk with your primary care provider about treatment options and where to go for care that will best meet your needs. Online, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (samhsa.gov) is a good resource for information on substance abuse.

Parts of this article are re-printed from Jennifer Fels, MS, RN, Director of Bennington Blueprint and the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

DVCP Middle School Prevention Programs:

Research shows that key risk periods for substance abuse occur during major transitions in children's lives.¹ Therefore, it becomes imperative to focus on these risks during the middle school years when adolescents encounter huge physical changes in addition to new experiences in academic and social situations. DVCP sponsors two research-based programs to help students navigate risks during these years.

Twin Valley Kids Above Tobacco (TVKAT), is a group of middle school members from grades 6 through 8, supported by advisor, Carrie Blake. The group's mission is to reduce tobacco use through education of their peers by conveying the message that tobacco is dangerous and that teens can be advocates both for their peers and the community. Student members are selected through referrals from their teachers. The ideal group member should be reliable, have the potential to become a leader, and be dedicated to taking the issue seriously.

In the fall, the TVKAT team attended a one-day program at the ropes course with High 5 of Brattleboro. Fiona Kidder, a 6th grade student, reflected on the day: "It was good because we had to work together as a team to keep a see-saw balanced in one of the activities." While she felt the presentations the team made to the fourth and fifth grade students at TVES were rewarding, she admitted to being nervous speaking before so many students.



This year's TVKAT slogan has been "Proud to be Tobacco Free". On any random day at TVMHS, visitors would likely see middle school students proudly wearing tees with the slogan. Tees and other anti-tobacco prizes are given out at lunchtime Trivia sessions, at the annual Kick Butts Dance held in March, and during the annual Midnight Madness event in May.

Jen Nilsen and Keli Gould are the advisors for Twin Valley's Above the Influence (ATI) team which consists of students from grades 6-8 who are selected in the same manner as the TVKAT group. The team's mission is to help their peers stay above the negative influences in their lives, such as bullying, cyber-bullying, drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

In the fall, ATI participated in an overnight training with a ropes course through High 5 together with other ATI groups from southern Vermont. The training included team-building strategies with teens and adults from other schools along with an important action-planning session with just the Twin Valley ATI team. In addition, the team attended a workshop with Youth to Youth from Dover, NH. They returned with many new ideas for strategies to involve all of the middle school students in activities at TVMHS and in their communities.

ATI collaborated with the Twin Valley High School Pride team for Red Ribbon Week focusing on education for youth and encouragement of participation in drug prevention activities. The students tied red ribbons and messages on the cars of staff, students, and teachers at TVMHS. In addition, they encouraged students to wear red in support of Red Ribbon Week, and each advisory made a large Red Ribbon with individual personal reasons for staying drug and alcohol free.



ATI members also collaborated with the TVHS Pride group to put stickers on alcohol in local establishments, urging customers to keep it out of the hands of minors. Their stickers were on pizza boxes from our local pizza shops as well. Aaron Soskin, a seventh grader, stated, "It was cool to help out in the community to show people that we care about young people."

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents". Second Edition. US Department of Health and Human Services. October 2003.

Top right photo: front row left to right: Fiona Kidder, Ayden Loos. Back row left to right: Celia Betit, Jayden Crawford, Alessia Thayer, Wes Capitani, Hannah Sullivan, Owen Grinold, Casey Sibilia, Jen Nilsen (illing in for Advisor-Carrie Blake)

Bottom left photo: front row left to right: Toby Kehoe, Elaine Gibb-Bursma, Finn Fisher, Kylie Reed, Izaak Park, CC Allembert, Sawyer King, Aaron Soskin. Back row left to right: Advisor Jen Nilsen, Advisor Keli Gould, Keegan Allembert.

Congratulations Graduates!



**TODAY IS A PERFECT DAY
TO START LIVING YOUR DREAMS.
CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES.**

**PARENT
UP**
ParentUpVT.org

Parents: Did you know that the key reason that kids give for NOT DRINKING is that they don't want to disappoint their parents?

With graduation comes celebration. Help your kids celebrate their accomplishments safely with tips from ParentupVT.org and they'll be off to accomplish their dreams.

DVCP recognizes all Graduating Seniors, especially those in our DVCP sponsored programs:

***Twin Valley Pride Group members:**

Nick Nilsen, Justin Hicks and Jack Lyddy.

***Wildcat Community Service Club members:**

Chris Robinson, Kyle Murdock, Erica Flanagan, Nick Nilsen, Maya Holschuh, Justin Hicks, Jack Lyddy and DJ Lazelle

Wondering what camps, programs and activities are available for your children this summer? Check out the 2016 DVCP Summer Events for Youth Calendar at:

<http://www.dvcp.org/events.php>



Steering Committee & Program Staff:

Carrie Blake
Dawn Borys
Courtney Burrows
Bob Edwards
Keli Gould
Cindy Hayford
Andy Hauty
Dario Lussardi
Karen Molina
Jen Nilsen
Shelley Park
Helena Queenie
Lynn Redd
Rebecca Sweeney

Upcoming Meetings:

June 20, 2016

August 15, 2016

September 19, 2016



Dinner is served at 5:30pm

Meeting 6:00-7:30pm

Everyone is Welcome

Please RSVP to:

info@dvcp.org

or 464-2202



**YOU CAN QUIT.
WE CAN HELP.**

Ready to quit?

802Quits provides free support to quit tobacco. The help and resources include nicotine replacement therapy, and phone, online, and in-person counseling. www.802quits.org | 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Deerfield Valley
Community Partnership
Cindy Hayford,
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From the Coordinator's Desk...



At a community meeting last year, the question was asked: "What does a community supportive of recovery look like?" Some of the responses included: understands addiction; every member of the community (especially parents) understands the problem, the solutions and the path a person needs to take to recovery and redemptive living; continuum of services-both assistance/support and consequences; cohesiveness-working together; works to make resources available and known; a willingness to hire people in recovery; supportive employers; open and intelligent discussion of addiction issues; forgiveness, self-reflection, compassion, high expectations; does not judge individuals in need of help; is loving, caring, protective, and accepting. How do you think we do as a community? I hope you will join the conversation. If you are interested in working towards these goals, please email me [@info@dvcp.org](mailto:info@dvcp.org)

On another note, I would like to thank Mount Snow for our collaboration on the Choose sNOw Program. This program started in 2013 for area youth in grades 6-11 to earn a Mount Snow Season's Pass for the following ski season. Students are required to attend two substance abuse prevention educational events (the first, with their parents) and perform community service by participating in Green-Up Day.

DVCP is incredibly grateful for this collaboration. The Choose sNOw program allows for our students to participate in healthy outdoor activity all winter. In addition, this program raises funding for a variety of other DVCP programs and activities and enables the community to experience national level motivational speakers (like Kevin Brooks, Johan Khalilian, Kathy & Chris Sullivan and Ty Sells) who share stories that inspire conversations between students and their parents about substance use and healthy choices. Thank you to Kelly Pawluk for initiating this program and Mount Snow staff for all of their work on this invaluable community asset!

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