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Opinion

Small talks early and often the key to preventing underage drinking

KATODA urges adults to have short, casual conversations with kids about the dangers of drinking alcohol before the age of 21

The Kaukauna Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Board is partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to promote Small Talks, a statewide campaign to prevent underage drinking.

To accomplish this, Small Talks encourages and equips adults to have short, casual conversations with kids on why drinking alcohol before the age of 21 is unhealthy, dangerous and can have lifelong consequences.

"As adults, we have an obligation to our young people to do everything in our power to make sure they have an opportunity to grow up to have healthy, strong futures," said Dr. Paul Russo, family physician and KATODA member. "Underage drinking is one thing that can stand

in the way of this. Developing brains are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of alcohol. Drinking prior to age 21 can damage the parts of the brain responsible for learning, memory, and self-control, negatively impacting both mental and physical health well into adulthood. Together, though, we can prevent this from happening. It begins by talking to children early and often about the risks of underage drinking."

Small Talks is based on two important research findings. The first is that the most powerful influence on a child's choices about underage drinking are the adults in their lives, from parents and caregivers to coaches and mentors. The second is that children begin to form their earliest opinions about alcohol around age eight.

So, what exactly is a small talk? The campaign's website explains, "Small talks are short, casual conversations that help you connect with your child on the important stuff, like underage drinking. Having lots of small talks over time helps build trust and set expectations as kids change and grow. Luckily, there's no big production

KATODA CORNER

necessary. Just choose the alcohol-free moment that feels right to you. You can have a small talk anytime, anywhere."

KATODA member Ellen Koski, mom of three, agrees that having conversations early and often is the key. "That's why my husband and I already have age appropriate conversations about underage drinking with our kids. And, as they grow up and start spending more time around other adults like teachers and coaches, we hope they have similar conversations with them as well."

Ready to have Small Talks with the children in your life? Visit SmallTalksWI.org for underage drinking facts, helpful conversation starters, and tips for talking to kids of any age.

Why a 'Tobacco is Changing; Don't be Fooled' campaign is important

Dear Editor:

Blue razz, pink lemonade, and sour apple. I bet you're thinking it's a flavor of candy, but what if I said instead of candy, those are flavors of e-cigarettes. Community Action for Healthy Living (CAHL), a non-profit coalition working on tobacco

prevention efforts, is ensuring no one in our community is fooled by today's tobacco tricks through the "Tobacco is Changing" campaign. Tobacco companies market their products to look like it would be good for you. Coming in different flavors and bright colors, my friends and I are being tricked into trying these products, and becoming addicted to them. As a member of FACT, a youth-driven movement of Wisconsin teens spreading the truth about tobacco, I hope to educate our

school and community about harmful effects of vaping tobacco. I also hope to prevent friends from using these dangerous products. Visit cahlinc.org to get out more information about "Tobacco is Changing; Don't be Fooled" campaign, and FACTmovement.org to learn about the work of FACT throughout the state.

Sincerely,
Sameeksha Srinivasan
Kaukauna FACT Member

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