**April is Alcohol Awareness Month – Talk to Your Teen About Alcohol**

 April 1 marked the beginning of the 31st annual **Alcohol Awareness Month** which was established in 1987 by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (NCADD). The 2017 theme is “Connecting the Dots: Opportunities for Recovery”. The theme is designed to draw attention to the many opportunities individuals, families and communities have to help prevent teen alcohol use. Excessive drinking is responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth each year according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, the economic cost to the US is approximately $24 billion in 2010.

Although the legal purchase and consumption age of alcohol throughout the United States remains 21, people aged 12 – 20 years of age consume 11% of all alcohol consumed in the US with 90% of that amount being consumed in the form of binge drinking (defined by females having 4 or more drinks and males 5 or more drinks at one time) per the CDC. The CDC also states that underage drinkers consume more drinks per occasion than adult drinkers. Also of concern is data showing that youth that start drinking before age 15 years of age are six times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life compared to those that begin drinking at or after age 21 according to the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality’s **2015 National Survey on** **Drug Use and Health.**

Underage drinking and drug use also results in many consequences each year. The consequences often involve violence, suicide, trouble at school, unsafe sexual practices, legal problems, changes in brain development that can have life-long effects and death from alcohol poisoning, to name a few. As expected, the risks are much greater for binge drinkers than non-binge drinkers. (**Binge drinking and associated health risk behaviors among high school students** by Miller JW, Naimi TS, Brewer RD, Jones SE)

The Steuben Prevention Coalition is urging all parents/guardians to talk with their children about alcohol. The NCADD states “research has shown that kids who have conversations with their parents and learn about the dangers of alcohol and drugs are 50% less likely to use these substances than those who do not have such conversations.

Here are some facts for parents to know about our youth in Steuben County. According to student responses from the 2015 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, (conducted in 11 of the 13 school districts in Steuben) when students were asked if they had consumed alcohol (not just a sip or taste) in the past 30 days, 8.8% of 8th graders, 19% of 10th graders and 38% of 12th graders responded yes. When asked if they binge drink, 4.4% of 8th graders, 10.3% of 10th graders and 23.3% of 12th graders also responded yes.

Please visit the Steuben Prevention Coalition website at [www.steubenpreventioncoalition.org](http://www.steubenpreventioncoalition.org) for additional information and visit us on Facebook.

Joe Rumsey -Superintendent of Bath Central School District

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Co-Chairs of the Steuben Prevention coalition