

# Parents have a big role in stopping drug abuse

By *Dayle Ohlau*

National statistics can be startling, especially when applied to our own communities. A federal report released just last week reveals "that more than 40 percent of the nation's estimated 10.8 million underage drinkers obtained their alcohol from adults of legal drinking age—including their own parents." (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.)

In Blaine County, our Community Drug Coalition is comprised of critical agencies working to improve the health and safety of our community by decreasing alcohol and other drug use among our youth. These agencies include Blaine County Government, Juvenile Probation, Blaine County Sheriff's Office, St. Luke's Center for Community Health, The Hailey Police Department, The School District, as well as volunteers from the business sector, Hispanic community, PTA's, addiction treatment, and youth.

Together, we are working to define our community norms that shape risky behavior among youth in the Wood River Valley. These findings lead to education, programs, and opportunities to keep our kids safe and parents and families informed. As Acting Surgeon General Steven K. Galson said recently, "Proper parental guidance alone may not be the complete solution to this devastating public health problem—but it is a critical part."

Recently, the following comments have been made to our coalition:

From a parent: "There seems to be a growing rift between the truth and what the adults believe to be true about the drug use of our kids."

From a business professional: "There is a group of parents who say, 'Everyone is doing it: it's better to buy the beer and have the kids at home. I smoked pot at their age (and still do.)'"

From a Parent: "There are few incentives for youth to not try alcohol or other drugs—particularly given that every single social event or location in our community serves alcohol as an incentive or perk of attending the events."

As your Community Drug Coalition we have some work to do, and with your help we can make our community a safer place for our kids. In saying that, we know that we need a broad base of support and teamwork so that no single organization or person must try and address this critical challenge alone.

Education, programs, and opportunities need funding for development. We are currently being funded by a state grant; unfortunately, that money isn't guaranteed for a second operating year. We are looking at other federal funding opportunities. Until then, our Blaine County Sheriff's Office in association with the Community Drug Coalition is inviting our community to "Jail House Rock" in conjunction with the opening of the new Blaine County Public Safety Facility, on Wednesday, July 23rd, from 6 -- 9 p.m. Tickets are \$25 and completely tax deductible. All proceeds benefit the Blaine County Community Drug Coalition. We invite you to join us for music, food, and "jail house" fun at the new facility, 1650 Aviation Drive. Bring your kids and they can tour the new jail. We also have Gold Star and Silver Star sponsor opportunities.

Please call 208-309-1219 for tickets or if you'd like to volunteer to help. Our coalition's community-wide approach affects the entire social environment, including values, practices, and policies that promote a safe and healthy community. It also changes the conditions that put children at risk for substance use, as well as other problem behaviors. Working together we can make these changes *happen*.

*-Ohlau is Executive Director of the Blaine County Community Drug Coalition*