

HAMPDEN-WILBRAHAM SAFE & HEALTHY STUDENTS COALITION

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RUTH DICRISTOFORO SELECTED AS NEW COALITION COORDINATOR

We are pleased to announce that Ruth DiCristoforo has accepted the position as our new Coalition Coordinator! Ruth spent eight years as the Family & Community Involvement Coordinator at the Monson Public Schools, and most recently worked for the Executive Office of Workforce Development. Welcome, Ruth!

COALITION PRESENTED COMMUNITY LEADERS FORUM

On June 10, 2016, The Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District (HWRSD) and the *Hampden-Wilbraham Safe and Healthy Students Coalition* partnered to bring together approximately 60 community leaders as a way to establish a common understanding about the concerns related to teen substance use in our area, and to engage participants in a commitment to meaningful action steps. The forum, titled *Community Partners in Prevention – Leadership Forum* – was expertly facilitated by trainers from CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America), the organization that provides training and technical assistance to coalitions such as *Safe and Healthy Students*, which are receiving funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Drug Free Communities program. Participants engaged in a series of exercises and facilitated discussions that heightened their collective awareness of the problems and solutions associated with teen substance use.

“This was a blueprint that other communities can use in the efforts to address substance abuse.”

Upcoming Meetings:

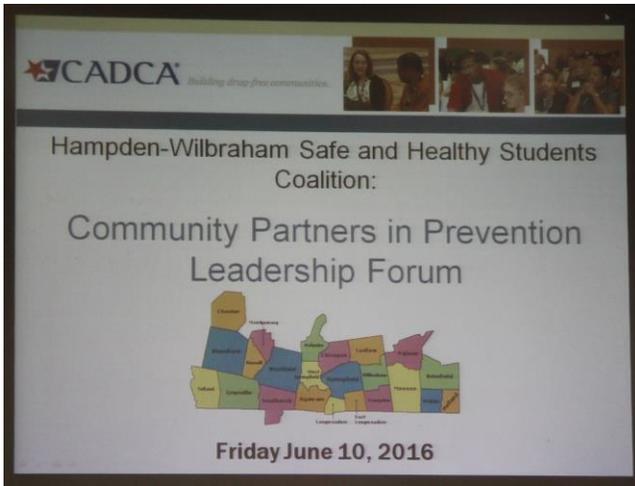
September 16, 2016

October 21, 2016

November 18, 2016

The day began with informal networking over coffee and a light breakfast. Stakeholders from various community entities – such as educators, current and former students, social service providers, law enforcement, and faith groups – were in attendance. Senator Eric Lesser arrived to inform the group of current and impending legislative action in which he is involved. The bulk of the day was spent in small group activities centered on brainstorming the root causes and local conditions that perpetuate adolescent substance use, and action steps for addressing them. Participants broke into three groups, each discussing one of three substances: marijuana, alcohol, and prescription drugs.

Participants were energized, enthusiastic, and excited after the forum. In a post-forum survey, one participant stated, “Overall this was a great forum that I wish it could be done countywide. This was a blueprint that other communities can use in the efforts to address substance abuse.” Another stated, “Really great group of people . . . if it was possible to gather us again, or engage those of us who were "newbies" further, just say the word.” Here are some pictures of this wonderful event!



Edward St.Vil (DA's office), Gail Grammarossa, and Antonio Simmons (DA's office)



Chief Roger Tucker (WPD) and Glenda Ferraro (parent)



Working Together!



Teri Brand (Nurse Leader), Lee Giglietti (Public Health Nurse), and Sharon Hal-Smith (Stop Access Coalition of Springfield)



State Senator Eric Lesser (D-Longmeadow)

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

A Message from Safe Schools, Healthy Students Director,
Gina Kahn.

Although summer is a time of rest and rejuvenation for many of our students, teachers, and staff, we have been very busy at the Office of Student Health and Safety! In early June we held a successful Leadership Forum, where students, parents, community leaders, and many others shared ideas, discussed strategies, inspired each other, and *inspired me* to continue our great work to ensure our students are safe, healthy, and thriving.



Gina Kahn (right), at the community forum, with Gail Gramarossa

We also brought two new team members on board this summer. We hired our new Coalition Coordinator, Ruth DiCristoforo (whose writing you might see in the Wilbraham-Hampden Times!). Ruth was most recently employed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Workforce Development, and has significant experience in community and family engagement. We know she will help us move our work forward, continue to bring us together, and share novel ideas for our community. Keep an eye out for messages from her in future newsletters! Additionally, we welcomed a Communications Coordinator to help us spread the word about all our efforts to our community and beyond. Marianna Litovich is a clinical/community psychologist whose research focuses on community systems and has seen the impact effective communication can have in bringing a group together and advancing its mission. If you like our new newsletter, let her know!

Looking ahead, we're thrilled to be planning a special event on October 12th with an incredibly exciting speaker. Dr. Bertha Madras, nationally-renowned expert in substance use and neurobiology, will be speaking about the effects of marijuana on the developing adolescent brain. This is a talk that all parents, interested students, and community members will benefit from, and we're so grateful that she has agreed to speak to us. We are working on finishing touches for this event, and it promises to be one not to miss!

So many thanks to each of you for your support of our efforts, and for all you do on behalf of our community.

- *Gina*

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: Check out NIDA for Teens!

NIDA for Teens is a project of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institutes of Health (NIH). Created for middle and high school students, teachers, and parents, this website provides accurate and timely information for use in and out of the classroom. Take a look!



teens.drugabuse.gov



Dr. Bertha Madras

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SAVE THE DATE!

The Hampden-Wilbraham Safe and Healthy Students Coalition invites the community to an important educational program featuring Dr. Bertha Madras, professor of Psychobiology in the Department of Psychiatry and chair of the Division of Neurochemistry at Harvard Medical School.

Wednesday, October 12, 2016

Minnechaug Regional High School

621 Main Street Wilbraham

6:30 PM -7:00 PM

Registration, Raffles, Resources

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Presentation

Admission is free

Dr. Madras is both informative and compelling. Anyone raising children today needs to see this presentation.

Would you like to be featured here?

We are looking for community members, students, parents, or coalition members whose work advances the mission of the Safe & Healthy Students Coalition. Is that you or someone you know? We want to feature your work in our newsletter, so tell us about yourself!

The Hampden Wilbraham Safe and Healthy Students Coalition is a collaboration of schools, community partners and parents who strive to prevent and reduce youth substance abuse and promote healthy development from early childhood to young adulthood. The Coalition welcomes interested community volunteers to be part of our efforts. For more information contact Ruth DiCristoforo, Coordinator at (413) 566-5060, Ext 17 or by Email: rdicristoforo@hwrspd.org.

Upcoming meeting dates: 9/16/2016, 10/21/2016 and 11/18/2016.