



**SHOW YOUR STUFF**  
Children are invited to participate in the News' coloring contest **A3**



**SPORTS**  
High School sports winter preview

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Dog's eye view of New Canaan **B5**

Thursday, December 17, 2009

# New Canaan News

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## IT HAPPENS HERE A LOOK AT TEEN DRUG USE IN NEW CANAAN

### The gateway to addiction

By **Brittany Lyte**  
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Teen drinking and drug experimentation is nothing new; but while some teens dabble in drugs once and never again, the ugly truth is that many teens who try alcohol and drugs will keep coming back for more.

Ginger Katz launched the Courage to Speak Foundation, a non-profit agency that aims to educate parents and teens about substance abuse, in 1996 after her 20-year-old son died of a heroin overdose in his bedroom of the family's Norwalk home.

Katz's son, Ian, began using marijuana experimentally in 10th grade. By his freshman year of college, he had developed a deadly addiction to heroin.

Marijuana and alcohol, Katz said, are the two most common drugs used by teens. They are also the most apt to lead to experimentation with other "harder" drugs, like heroin.

According to Katz, it takes a 30-year-old 10 years to reach the chronic stages of alcoholism. With the same amount of alcohol, she said, it takes a teen 15 and younger fewer than 15 months to reach the chronic stages of alcoholism.

"Kids' bodies are still growing," Katz said. "Their brains do not develop until they are 24 years old, so these drugs, including alcohol, are very dangerous for a teenager's growing

"This is a very competitive academic environment. [These students] come from accomplished families that expect that their kids will go to a good college, and it's a lot of pressure for them."

Dr. Sandra Gomez  
Silver Hill Hospital

See Gateway on A8

### By the Numbers

- 77,800**  
Number of high school students in Connecticut who currently use alcohol.
- 26.2**  
Percentage of Connecticut high school students who consumed five or more alcoholic drinks in a row within a couple of hours at least once during the last 30 days
- 1 in 3**  
Connecticut 12th graders have used marijuana at least once in the 30 days leading up to the survey
- 15.1**  
Percentage of Connecticut high school seniors who have used some form of cocaine at least once in their lives.
- 12.9**  
Percentage of Connecticut high school students who have ever used over-the-counter medications to get high.
- 30.5**  
Estimated percentage of Connecticut high school students who were offered, sold or given illegal drugs on school property in the last year.

— Connecticut School Health Survey, 2007

### Studies: Parents are the first line of defense

By **Brittany Lyte**  
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Teens whose parents regularly discuss the dangers of marijuana with them have a 5 percent chance of using the drug, compared to a 45 percent chance for teens whose parents shy away from the subject.

This statistic is part of Courageous Parenting 101, a free class that educates parents about how to better prevent their child from using drugs or alcohol. The class is sponsored by the Courage to Speak Foundation, a Norwalk-based non-profit launched by Ginger Katz in 1996 after her 20-year-old son, Ian, died of a drug overdose in his bedroom the night before he was scheduled to enter into a rehab program.

The number one deterrent, Katz said, is a parent talking to their child on a regular basis about not doing drugs. Only one in three parents do this, she said.

Parents should start an open dialogue with their child about drugs and alcohol as early as first

**Inside:**

- Parents' resource guide
- Drug dictionary
- New Canaan drug arrests

grade, according to Katz. Parents of elementary school students can begin with age-appropriate messages about the dangers of the pills in the medicine cabinet, she said. Katz also suggests that parents encourage their youngsters to keep out of smoky rooms to help them develop a "sense of wrong" about cigarettes rather than a "sense of cool."

"It's not something you wait to do when you first find out they're smoking marijuana," Katz said.

To parents who think that elementary school students are too young for conversations about drugs and alcohol, Katz answers with a statistic from the American Pediatric Association: one in five children have been drunk from alcohol by the fifth grade.

See Talking on A9

### What the schools are doing to prevent drug and alcohol abuse

By **Brittany Lyte**  
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Chappy Leboond figures that about 25 percent of his peers from New Canaan High School's class of 2002 displayed that they had a problem with alcohol.

Leboond, 25, has been sober for 22 months. He began a 12-year battle with substance abuse as an 11-year-old boy.

Now recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, Leboond volunteers at local AL-ANON meetings. Formerly he was the co-coordinator of a short-lived teen Alcoholics Anonymous meeting based at Silver

See Schools on A10

### Rates of alcohol use in 2008

Age	Percentage
12-13	3.4
14-15	13.1
16-17	26.1
18-20	48.7

— The 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

### NCHS among top state schools

By **Wynne Parry**

New Canaan High School earned a silver medal and a spot among the best high schools in the nation on a new ranking released by U.S. News & World Report last week.

"We have an excellent high school and what I think makes us unique is the balance that the faculty and the administration has achieved," Superintendent David Abbey said. "We have strong academic, athletic, and visual and performing arts programs.

"We also have great participation from the students in an array of co-curricular programs ... and there's a strong ethic with regards to community service," Abbey said.

NCHS was alerted of its top ranking this summer.

"I suppose it's an honor to be on the list, but we don't use rankings like these to validate what we're doing," NCHS Prin-

See Schools on A18

### Walker to head SWRMPO

By **Martin B. Cassidy**  
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In coming years, elected leaders from Greenwich to Weston will have to prioritize which transportation projects to put their weight behind, such as the long-delayed Merritt Parkway Route 7 interchange, to capture the attention and funding of a cash-strapped state, New Canaan First Selectman Jeb Walker said.

"We will have to focus on those things that are absolutely the most important to get done," said Walker, the newly elected chairman of the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Walker, who has served as New Canaan's first selectman since 2007, discussed the state's finan-

See Walker on A8

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**Weather**

Today will be windy and cold with mostly sunny skies. Temps are expected to drop into the teens overnight.

**HIGH 31**

**LOW 18**

