



From Dayna's Desk...

Happy 2009 and best wishes for the final year of this decade! Hard to believe—seems like we were just ringing in the new millennium!

Every January friends ask me about my “New Year’s resolutions” and I always reply that I have none. For someone who likes to plan and organize, it seems strange that I so readily forego this tradition. But I think it is my attempt to be more present and grateful for what “is.” Speaking of which, I feel extremely fortunate to live and work in such an amazing community! As this newsletter clearly proves, we are a District filled with caring people who want to make a positive difference in the lives of young people.

There is no real theme for this issue, but the common strand is probably **DIALOGUE**. In many ways we have become a polarized society, focusing on our differences instead of our commonalities. (Nothing like an election to remind us of this!) But this newsletter highlights the importance of really listening to all perspectives, without judgment!

Contact me at 383-1211 or dscott@cssu.org if you want to chat.

Thanks and be well,

Dayna Scott, Coordinator & Editor



Are You a Puzzled Parent?

Imagine putting together a complicated puzzle. Now imagine doing that **WITHOUT** getting to see the finished picture on the box beforehand! Think that would be tough? If you’ve ever actually done a puzzle this way, you know that it is extremely challenging. Why? Because if you don’t have a picture of what you want the end product to look like, it’s harder to create it. The same is true with parenting. Do you have a picture of your child’s future? Visualize all of your hopes and dreams coming true for them. What does that look like?

Now consider the following questions:

- * Do you expect that your child will stay away from alcohol and other drugs throughout high school?
- * How would you react if your child was in a physical fight with another student?
- * What would happen if your child broke curfew?
- * Do you expect that your child will have sex before age 18?

All of these questions are designed to help you clarify your position on some of the issues that might cloud the picture you have of your child’s future. And they can all be addressed by developing a family policy that outlines your dreams and expectations for your children. How do you do this? The following are a few simple steps that can help.

1. **Talk to your children about their future.** They need to be reminded that you genuinely have their best interests at heart and want good things for them. This may mean wanting them to get good grades, make safe decisions, or just be happy and healthy!
2. **Involve your children in family decision-making.** Work together with your children to decide family rules, fun time, etc. Make sure that everyone gets a chance to voice opinions and concerns. The goal should be to empower your children and give them the skills they’ll need to practice making decisions. The “Do as I say or else” method usually backfires and all they learn is “Don’t get caught!”
3. **Create a list of expectations for behaviors and consequences for not following them.** There’s usually more buy-in if your children have a say in making the rules. It might be helpful to put these in a place where your family can see them everyday. Remember—young people will test boundaries, so be prepared to enforce the agreed-upon consequences!

Interested in parenting issues? **GET INVOLVED IN A CY WORK GROUP!** Help plan educational events...organize parent support groups...plan fun, drug-free activities for youth! Call 383-1211 or e-mail dscott@cssu.org for info!

10 Years Strong-CY Mentoring!



This year marks the 10th anniversary of the extremely successful CY Mentoring Program, designed to support 5th

through 8th graders through the development of close, personal relationships with caring adults in the community. Volunteers spend one hour per week at school with their student mentees, participating in a variety of activities together such as games, arts and crafts, sports, cooking, and conversation.

In 1999 the program began as a small pilot project at Williston Central School. Today, it has grown ten-fold to support more than 120 matches in all four CSSU middle schools! Thanks to the work of founders Sarah Beers and Shirley Fox, as well as current director, Nancy Carlson, and coordinators Ginny Roberts, Georgene Grover and Carol Conard!

Quit YOUR Way

I quit smoking on the Great American Smokeout Day 11 years ago. I had tried to quit several times including hypnotism twice, but on this day I went cold turkey and finally succeeded after many attempts. It was the most difficult thing I have ever done, but the best decision I ever made. (School staff member, 2008)

CY and the VT Department of Health have teamed up to support smokers who want to quit—in their own way, on their own terms. Most of the 50,000 Vermonters who tried to stop smoking last year wanted to do it on their own, so we are offering a host of tools to help them do that. For more details, visit VTQuitnetwork.org or call 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669).

Exploring Ambiguity

Guest column by Matt Bijur, LADC/LCMHC



Don't worry—the Just Ask Jen column will be back next issue! Meanwhile, CY Board member,

Charlotte parent, and licensed counselor, Matt Bijur, is filling in. The topic? The ambiguity he sees when talking to kids about smoking cigarettes vs. smoking pot.

12 out of 9 people who read this will understand 62% of what I am saying. Say what? Statistics can be used to validate just about any point and can often be ambiguous in their meaning. According to the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, teens are smoking far less than at any other time in recent history—only 8% of all CSSU 8th – 12th graders reported smoking a cigarette in the past 30 days! However, according to the same study, marijuana use among teens has leveled, and, in some instances, is actually increasing—18% of 8th – 12th graders reported using pot in the past 30 days. As an alcohol, drug and mental health counselor in Chittenden County, I find these two statistical observations fascinating.

In my line of work I often meet with teens who say they do not, or would never, smoke cigarettes, but would readily smoke marijuana. To elucidate their thoughts and feelings, I often find myself asking “Which do you think is worse for you, smoking tobacco or smoking marijuana?” The answers vary widely, but generally can be distilled into a few stock responses: cigarettes are addictive and cause cancer and contain man-made additives, like shards of fiberglass and rat poison; but marijuana, well,

you can't get addicted to that, it helps with cancer, and it's natural.

If the goal is to build supportive, caring and honest relationships, then we need to maintain an open dialogue with youth. Resisting the impulse to discount or dismiss ideas is a useful skill for parents, teachers and counselors, but it takes focused practice for many of us. That said, we can work with youth to dissect ideas, beyond their simplistic, sound bite level.

As an example, let's look at natural. To me, these things are natural: snow, tomatoes, strawberries and oxygen. These other things are also natural: E.coli, arsenic, methane and pit viper venom. Each substance conjures up an image with an associated feeling. As warm or chilly as those may be, the truth is that all of the above can be harmful, even fatal, if misused. Strawberries, for some people, cause a deathly allergic reaction. Tomatoes, while a pasta sauce staple of my children's diet, have leaves that, if ingested, can kill. Snow, oxygen, two of my favorites, spell bad news if there is too much of either. And, please, do not try smoking pit viper venom.

So which is worse--tobacco or marijuana? I put forward that there is no right answer. There are varying degrees of harm, discomfort or joy that can come from both. However, it is important to acknowledge the ambiguity that exists and commit ourselves to an honest, deeper exploration of it. I'm sure that at least 62.3% of you will agree.

**Gently edited by Dayna Scott.*



News & Events



Real life



Safety Zone



The Facts



CY Youth "All-Stars"



Name: *Tim Williams*
Grade: *12*
Hometown: *St. George*
Years in CY: *A scary 7!*

"First CY-sponsored activity that you remember?" The CY Mentoring Program at Williston, back in 6th grade. I completely and totally loved it and had the best mentor you have ever had—Art Tuttle! Because of the interaction we had at school, I still stay in close contact with him and visit often, much to his liking.

"Best reason for people to be drug-free?" Being drug-free is fun and it won't totally mess you up! Sadly I have seen that happen to some people who were fairly close to me...and in the past I tried some risky stuff and well didn't like where it was going and was lucky enough to have some really good support around me to, well, kick me in the &*% and get me on the right track!

"Last movie you saw in a theater?" Yes Man, a comedy with Jim Carey who has to say yes to everything! I thought, hey, that could be a fun improv game, what with not being

able to say no or anything... please insert diabolical laugh here.

"Biggest fear?" My biggest fear right now—'cause lets face it, fear changes—is the fear of failure. Less of failing myself, but of failing others.

"If you could be described as a toy, what would it be?" Do you really want me to respond to that? Well... I would be something used on a non-regular basis...I'd be able to fit in a dresser...you know what I am.... I am a...set of playing cards!!

"Plans after CVU?" I am going to go to college to become a history teacher for high school students, live and work here in Vermont (pronounced with the t), and well, if I can start an improv group at my own school...



Name: *Callan Souzzi-Rearic*
Grade: *11*
Hometown: *Williston*
Years in CY: *Around 3*

"First CY-sponsored activity that you remember?" Improv, my freshman year. I remember being really nervous because I didn't know anyone...when improv started I

remember being amazed at how good everyone was. When I finally did a scene I loved it and I've been hooked ever since!

"Best reason for people to stay drug-free?" The fact that taking drugs can get in the way of your dreams.

What you get out of being involved with CY? I get so many things out of being involved in CY. I have met so many new people, I have built confidence and have gotten role models out of both other students and the leaders of CY.

"Something you want to do before you turn 40?" I want to go sky diving and zorbing in New Zealand.

"A challenge you've experienced but overcome?" I haven't yet faced a huge challenge in my life, however I have faced smaller challenges. In these experiences I have found that I face challenges with courage, strength and a certain panache at looking for the unexpected.

To nominate a student for our CY Youth All-Stars, please e-mail Dayna at dscott@cssu.org or call 383-1211.

CVU LEAD Puts a Face on Student Safety Concerns

Did you know that 1 person dies every 30 minutes in an impaired driving crash in the United States? CVU students are aware of this thanks to the efforts of CY's LEAD group. On Monday, December 22nd the CY LEAD group spearheaded an event called "Ghost Out." The purpose of this event was to educate students and staff about impaired driving and the number of lives lost because of alcohol and other drug-related crashes.

To get their point across in a dramatic



L to R: Andy Bonneau, Allison Giroux, Veronica Nardone & Christine Parker help at CVU's "Ghost Out Day"

and unforgettable fashion, 48 students were "ghosted out" during the day, signifying that they had "died" from an alcohol or other drug-related crash. Then they were taken from class, had their faces painted white, and had to dress in all black. They wore placards with facts about impaired driving and handed out 5 ribbons for other people to wear, symbolizing those whose lives had been affected by their death. This event was part of CY's larger effort to promote a safe holiday season!



Transitions



Parents



Links



www.seewhy.info

Community Calendar of Events

January

- * **Saturday, 1/24: Parenting Tips for Success—One-Day Seminar.** Looking for real-life, practical tips to help you as a parent? Don't miss this popular one-day seminar to be held at CVU High School from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm. Contact Jen at 482-6951 or jbickel-hayes@cvuhs.org.
- * **Throughout January: National Mentoring Month.** Highlights include an Expo at the University Mall on 1/17 and a Thank-You Mentors Breakfast on 1/22 at City Hall. To learn how you can change a child's life forever and become a mentor, call CY Mentoring at 879-5874 or visit Mobius at www.mobiusmentors.org.

February

- * **Throughout the Month:** CY will be giving the Youth

Risk Behavior Survey to all 9th—12th graders and the Swisher Survey to all 6th and 7th graders. Call your school for more details.

Looking Ahead to Spring

- * **SAVE THE DATE—Thursday 3/12:** Renown national speaker coming to Chittenden South! Stephen Wallace, author of the bestselling book *Reality Gap: Alcohol, Drugs and Sex—What Parents Don't Know*. Look for more details in your school newsletters and local papers, or contact Dayna at 383-1211, dscott@cssu.org.
- * **Friday, 3/13: CY-sponsored Coffeehouse at CVU.** All 9th—12th graders are encouraged to share their talents at this ever-popular event. Wanted: parent chaperones! For details, call Margo Austin at 482-7156 or e-mail Maustin@cvuhs.org.

I Care About Young People!

I would like to join—or renew membership with—CY. Please accept my tax-deductible 2009 contribution at the following level:

- \$100** will support our peer prevention and leadership activities, including the student-initiated See Why Improv Troupe.
- \$50** will support our Student Assistance Program which serves young people affected by their own or someone else's drug use.
- \$25** will support parent education and teacher trainings across the Chittenden South District.
- Larger contributions** will allow us to serve more people through programs like the CY Mentoring Program & ACCESS to CVU.
- I would like to donate my time or services**—as a chaperone for drug-free activities, by offering food or prizes for retreats, etc. Specify your interest below:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

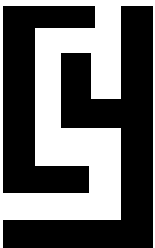
Phone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Would you like information on **becoming a mentor for a child** in our schools? ___ Yes ___ Not at this time

___ I would like to **nominate a volunteer to be honored at Aw Shucks Night**. This is someone from a CSSU town who has donated significant time helping youth or families. List name (s) here:

Please make checks payable to "CSSU" and mail to CY, 5420 Shelburne Rd., #300, Shelburne, VT 05482, ATTN: CY



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CY-Connecting Youth
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Shelburne, VT 05482

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