



# Prevention *forum* Online

Spring/Summer 2012 Volume 32, No.2

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## Reaching the Masses through Media Outreach

Prevention Profile: Margaret Pither

DomeShift 2012 Update

A How-To Guide To Getting The Word Out

Keeping Your Entering Freshman  
Alcohol and Drug-Free In College



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

## Communication is required...

Since the beginning of time, all living species have learned to communicate a message. Whether it is through a dog's use of olfactory communication to "mark a territory", a firefly's usage of bioluminescence to attract a mate or prey, or a person's gesture, written language or verbal sounds, a message is sent and received by another.

Now, in our rapidly evolving world of using technology to communicate – compare the telegraph over 150 years ago to email and smartphones today – for some, it's difficult to get through one day without their cellphones, let alone envisioning their lives without some form of communication. Communication is required...period.

When considering why communication is important, the bottom line is this: the better your communication skills, the greater success you can achieve. The importance of communication skills cannot be understated.

Communication is truly achieved when the sender and the receiver share an understanding of the communicated message. Many times, this is easier said than done.

In this issue of *Prevention Forum Online*, we explore the challenges facing preventionists in their effort to promote their prevention message to the masses (*page 10*), and offer helpful tips to formulate and send messaging through different channels (*page 14*).

The late spring and early summertime calls for high school graduations and young adults thinking about leaving home for the first time. We delve into the importance of parents speaking to their entering freshman about staying alcohol and drug-free in college (*page 16*). Time and time again, research has proven that parental involvement and positive factors in a teen's life significantly influence their decision to stay substance-free.

Although we examine different challenges in communicating a clear, concise prevention message, it is also important to share our successes. We invite you to submit your story by sending an email to [communications@prevention.org](mailto:communications@prevention.org) and tell us how you met or overcame an obstacle by using different communication tactics. Your story may be used as a reference to help others in similar situations.

As always, we continue to learn – from each other at Prevention First and from others across the state. We welcome your comments and feedback.



Laura Shaw  
Managing Editor



## Study Finds Teen Girls Take More Risks Behind Wheel

A new [study](#) suggests that teen girls are far more likely than boys to engage in distracted driving behavior. “There’s a remarkable difference between boys and girls when it comes to distracting driving habits. In almost every category we surveyed ... girls are more likely to engage in dangerous or distracting behaviors by almost 15 percent,” said Angela Patterson of [Bridgestone Americas](#), which conducted the study. While the majority of teens admitted they are most likely to fidget with a radio while driving, they see it as less dangerous than other factors causing accidents. Teens perceive driving drunk, reading text messages and eating while driving, as well as having other passengers in the car, as the biggest distractions for drivers their age.

## Teen Alcohol Use – Parents Have More Influence than They Think

Underage drinking is not just a youth problem, it is also an adult issue. Over half of all high school age drinkers get their alcohol from an adult, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association’s (SAMHSA) [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) – half of those adults providing alcohol are parents or other family members. Although adults can be part of the underage drinking problem, they can also be the solution. [Mothers Against Drunk Driving](#) (MADD) has teamed up with Dr. Robert Turrisi of Pennsylvania State University to create the [Power of Parents](#) handbook. Based on Dr. Turrisi’s research, this handbook gives proven tips on how to talk with your teens about alcohol in a productive, positive way. Parents who read the handbook and have the intentional conversation with their teens about alcohol can reduce underage drinking behaviors by as much as 30 percent.

## New Alcohol Screening Guide for Youth

Based on two questions from a newly released guide, health care professionals are able to spot children and teenagers at risk for alcohol-related problems. [Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention for Youth: A Practitioner’s Guide](#) is now available from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), part of the National Institutes of Health. Developed in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics, clinical researchers and health practitioners, the guide introduces a two-question screening tool and an innovative youth alcohol risk estimator to help clinicians overcome time constraints and other common barriers to youth alcohol screening.

## Scientists Work to Make Prescription Painkillers ‘Unabusable’

Scientists are working to make prescription painkillers and other commonly misused drugs “unabusable” by reformulating them, according to Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Purdue Pharma, maker of OxyContin, released a new version of the drug two years ago that is resistant to crushing and cutting, common ways in which the drug was abused. “It is now much more difficult to prepare for snorting or injecting,” a company spokeswoman told the [Orlando Sentinel](#). Drug companies are also creating pills with the same consistency as gummy bears, which are too soft to crush. Some drugs in development will not work unless they encounter the stomach’s digestive enzymes, making them useless if they are snorted or injected.



## Survey Finds Marijuana Use on the Rise among Teens

Survey results released by [The Partnership at Drugfree.org](http://ThePartnershipatDrugfree.org) and MetLife Foundation found that heavy past-month marijuana use has increased significantly among U.S. teens since 2008, with one in 10 teens smoking marijuana at least 20 times a month. The [Partnership Attitude Tracking Study \(PATS\)](#), sponsored by [MetLife Foundation](#), found that 9 percent of teens (nearly 1.5 million) smoked marijuana heavily (at least 20 times) in the past month. The survey also found past-year use of marijuana rose from 31 percent in 2008, to 39 percent (six million teens) in 2011, with the lifetime use increasing from 39 percent in 2008, to 47 percent (eight million teens) in 2011. This marks an upward trend in teen marijuana use over the past three years. The last time marijuana use was this widespread among teens was in 1998, when past-month use of marijuana was at 27 percent.



## Minors Gain Easy Access to Alcohol through Online Retailer Purchasing

According to a new study by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's researchers, minors can easily purchase alcohol online as a result of poor age verification by Internet alcohol vendors and shipping companies, such as UPS and FedEx. The study, published in the May issue of the [Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine](#), found that 45 out of 100 orders attempted by underage buyers were successful, even though they provided their real underage driver's license when asked; only 28 percent of orders placed by minors were rejected because of age verification. "With just a few clicks on their computer or smartphone, kids can order alcohol delivered to their home," said Rebecca Williams, Ph.D., research associate at UNC's Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and lead author of the study. "We were amazed at how easy it was for minors to buy alcohol online. Using their real ID and a prepaid Visa card, they could place an order for alcohol in just a few minutes and often have it delivered to their door in a matter of days without anyone ever trying to verify their age."

## Underage Drinking Hospitalizations Cost \$755 Million in the U.S. Each Year

According to a new [study](#) by the Mayo Clinic, hospitalization for underage drinking costs an estimated \$755 million in the United States each year. Nearly one-fourth of the hospitalizations included an injury stemming from causes related to traffic accidents, assaults or fights. Geographically and demographically, hospitalizations due to alcohol were highest in the Northeast and Midwest United States, with Native and other/mixed-race Americans having the highest rates of medical care. In the future, these findings may help target substance abuse prevention efforts toward geographic and demographic groups at greatest risk.

## Potential Teen Trend – Drinking Hand Sanitizer

The latest over-the-counter product teens have begun using to get a quick high involves a few swigs of hand sanitizer. After [six teenagers](#) suffered alcohol poisoning from drinking hand sanitizer in California, public health officials are warning parents to look out for signs of abuse. Liquid hand sanitizer is 62 percent ethyl alcohol, and can make a 120-proof liquid. After a few swallows, a person can become so intoxicated that they need to seek treatment in the emergency room. Experts advise parents to buy foam hand sanitizer instead of gel because it is more difficult to extract alcohol from the foam. “Do not leave it around the house, and monitor it as you would any other liquor or medicine,” recommends Helen Arbogast, Injury Prevention coordinator in the Trauma Program at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. She also tells parents to watch for signs of intoxication.

## Some Emergency Departments Won’t Test for Alcohol Because of Insurance Issues

The [Kaiser Health News](#) reports that up to 50 percent of people who are treated in hospital emergency departments and trauma centers are under the influence of alcohol. Some emergency departments do not test patients’ blood or urine for alcohol because of issues with insurance payments. Self-insured companies that pay their employees’ health care costs directly are allowed to refuse to cover claims related to alcohol. Many states have laws that allow health insurers to refuse to pay for care if the patient’s injuries occurred while he or she was under the influence of alcohol; some laws also include drug use.

## Tennessee Hospital Becoming Pioneer in the Treatment of Babies Born Exposed to Prescription Drugs

Nearly half of the newborn babies in the [neonatal intensive care unit at East Tennessee Children’s Hospital](#) in Knoxville, Tenn., are suffering from withdrawal to prescription drugs. For over a year, the Knoxville hospital has been dealing with a dramatic increase in the number of newborns with [neonatal abstinence syndrome](#), or NAS – which is the withdrawal process a newborn goes through after in utero exposure to certain medications. Between 55 and 94 percent of babies exposed to



opioids prior to birth exhibit signs of withdrawal, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. The babies are easily agitated and cry constantly, and many cannot be near sound and light. Other symptoms can include a distinct, high-pitched cry, tightening of the muscles and seizures. Treatments are individualized based on the severity of withdrawal; babies are given small doses of morphine every three hours with feedings. Over the following weeks, doses are gradually decreased to wean babies off the drugs. Since adopting the morphine protocol, the average hospital stay for these infants has decreased by several days, now averaging 24 days. In the meantime, the hospital has become a pioneer in the treatment of babies with NAS. With one baby [born every hour](#) already in withdrawal – other states are turning to the East Tennessee Children’s Hospital for guidance.

NOT E M W O R T H Y

# PREVENTION PROFILE

## Margaret Pither

**“I had to figure out the kind of prevention efforts that were going to keep my community healthy.”**



As the Student Assistance Program Coordinator for Vernon Hills High School (VHHS), Margaret Pither serves as both a prevention specialist and an interventionist for students tackling issues surrounding drugs and alcohol. “With my prevention hat, I work with the social workers on topics that hinder students from succeeding academically. That could

be running groups for grief and loss, helping kids address the realities of divorce, or helping educate the staff on teen depression,” she explained. Additionally, Pither is responsible for all the prevention activities for the school, such as the activities for Red Ribbon Week, health fairs, unity fairs, all school speakers, pre-prom activities and snowball activities. Pither also sponsors two prevention clubs – Voices in Prevention (VIP) and SPARK (Supporting Peers and Reaching Kids) – that encourage students to make healthy choices. In addition, she works with the parents and the community to increase community awareness of underage drinking and substance use; this includes serving as the liaison to the community for the Community Partnership for Healthy Youth Coalition.

While Pither has a full plate handling the prevention activities for more than 1,300 students at VHHS, she also operates a private practice as a licensed clinical professional counselor, specializing in the treatment of alcohol and drug addiction. Her private counseling is a spin-off from her nine years serving as an adolescent and adult program counselor at the Lutheran General Addiction Treatment Center in Park Ridge.

### **Moving from treatment to prevention**

Pither has been at Vernon Hills High School for 12 years. With experiences in both treatment and prevention, she has seen the

full spectrum of issues surrounding alcohol and drug addictions. It is because of this dual background that Pither is committed to the social norms campaign at VHHS. Initially, when she started at the high school, Pither worked with several anti-drug and alcohol initiatives that were popular at the time, but were not effective. “It just seemed that I had to reinvent the wheel each year,” she said in describing how the social norms campaign got its start. She connected with the Lake County Health Department, as well as her fellow Student Assistance Program coordinators in other schools, and learned about the science of prevention. “I had to find out what the issues were with our students and figure out the kind of prevention efforts that would keep our community healthy,” Pither said. “That’s where the surveys came into play. Social norms had done a lot of research. It offered a positive approach that fit our school population better than scare tactics,” she added.

A school fit was important. The social norms approach encouraged the community to take pride in their students and the school. “It fit nicely with the attitude of ‘let’s talk about the kids who are doing well, who are making good decisions,’ in addition to focusing on those few who are not,” Pither explained. She further added that the social norms approach “re-educated students on what the real norms were. We know that students like to follow their peers, so if they know that their peers aren’t using, they’re more likely to make the same decision and have another reason to say no.”

### **Social norms progress**

Pither and the VHHS community’s assessment about the students proved to be correct. Since the first survey in 2006, there has been a 10 percent increase in the number of students reporting that they have not drunk any alcohol in the last 30 days. “We’ve also seen student perceptions change,” said Pither. “Before, about 80 to 90 percent of students thought most of their peers were drinking or using drugs. Now, students know that a majority of their classmates aren’t using drugs or drinking and are educated on the true percentages,” she continued.

In describing Vernon Hills’ social norms campaign, Pither explained that it is recognized as a part of the school culture

and integrated across the curriculum. The survey, which is the foundation of the campaign, is conducted every two years, with the next one planned for October 2012. The program's theme, *The Choice is Yours*, reaches students through a variety of methods, including posters, newsletters, e-newsletters, videos, postcards, student focus groups, lunch and learns and other methods. Information is even placed in student bathrooms. Students are not the only audience receiving these messages – parents, faculty and the community at large are taking notice, with presentations made to parent organizations, local Rotary clubs and other groups.



By any measure, Vernon Hills' social norms campaign is successful. "We keep going back to the survey; it's the main way we can measure what the kids are doing," Pither said. The numbers are impressive: more than 70 percent of VHHS seniors report not drinking alcohol during the last 30 days; more than 80 percent of sophomores report the same. Yet, it is the anecdotal evidence that adds color to those statistics. "Some kids report that it's not as cool to use drugs; it's not cool to talk about using, either," said Pither. One other way to gauge the acceptance of the social norms approach is how it has been used by other programs. "For instance," Pither added, "the summer reading program used a similar approach and had a poster that said '65 percent of students reported reading books this summer when they didn't have to,' which goes to show the power of the message."

### Changes in the prevention field

With nearly 20 years in the drug and alcohol intervention field – in treatment and prevention – Pither has witnessed how the field has changed. On one hand, "I've seen better education on evidence based strategies," she said. "Now people ask the questions, 'What's the research on this program? Is it evidence-based?' These are positive developments." On the other hand, Pither has seen fewer dollars directed toward drug and alcohol education, prevention and treatment due to federal and state funding cutbacks.

She has also seen a change in how young people interact with drugs and alcohol, noting, "Because of online access, students can get drug information and connected to sources much faster than in the past. The progression of use is not the same, either." Pither explains that some may experiment with prescription drugs due

to easy access in their medicine cabinets, and from there, progress quickly to heroin in pill form instead of first experimenting with tobacco, alcohol and marijuana. In addition, the active ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), in marijuana and the potency of other drugs are much higher than it was in the past.

Pither's work with Vernon Hills' youth is what keeps her motivated and optimistic about working in prevention. For the VIP program, VHHS students visit area middle schools to talk about decision-making in high school. "It's so good to see students stand up, talk about why and how they try to make good decisions, and how impactful they can be with the feeder

school students. The younger students get the message that this is serious," she adds.

### Changes going forward

Going forward, Pither believes that it is important for those working in prevention to collaborate with the parents and the community at large. "Just to do things in the schools isn't enough," she said, "we must partner with parents and with the community." Pither also thinks it is crucial to get young people involved in prevention efforts. "They have to be a part of it because they know what appeals to their peers; otherwise, it doesn't have the same impact," she said.

For others working in prevention, especially school-based professionals, Pither offers some suggestions:

- Use evidence based strategies
- Educate your faculty on what you're doing and help them incorporate it across the curriculum
- Never tire of prevention
- Keep up and be smart about what your target population is doing

"People don't realize how much it costs the community, taxpayers, or families when someone gets addicted," Pither said. "If we can stop the cycle of addiction for even a small number of families, that's a great impact. We're not ever wasting our time when we do this work."

Check out the [Vernon Hills High School](#) website for more information on its social norms campaign or visit the [Lake County Health Department](#) website.



## Different purposes for media outreach

The prevention field can work the media for three different purposes, according to a report about [Media Advocacy](#), written by the Community Prevention Institute:

- Media advocacy is the strategic use of media to gain public and policymaker support for policy goals. Media advocacy also contributes to community norms change. It sets the public agenda and advances policy-based solutions. Media advocacy frames issues to emphasize that problems are a shared community responsibility, and as such, are amenable to change. Finally, it empowers community members to take control of conditions affecting public health.
- Social marketing (not to be confused with [social media](#)) targets individuals based on the premise that if individuals have appropriate information, they will change their behavior. Social marketing in public health uses the media to deliver public education/awareness messages that inform people about health risks and healthy behaviors.
- Public relations create a positive public image of a person or organization and their activities. Public relations goals may conflict with public health goals, particularly when an organization considers that it is not in their best interest to discuss problems; i.e., a university's binge drinking rate.

The report added that using all three of these methods in conjunction with each other will make the most impact in your media outreach efforts. For more information on strategically combining these methods, check out the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [Media Outreach Guide](#).

## Creating a buzz

Like many preventionists, Carol Geary, coalition coordinator for [The Carroll County Substance Education Coalition \(CCSEC\)](#), understands the importance of not just delivering prevention messages – but presenting them in a manner in which they will resonate with people. “We want to be viewed as the people with the information, and by establishing relationships with the media, we can achieve that goal.”

She has found the media to be a valuable partner in helping her get the prevention messages to the community, including involving animals to attract an audience. “We have to get creative to get people's attention,” she said

In a media campaign Geary produced to promote the consequences of texting and driving, she used an image of a giant penguin with the message, “Are you distracted now?” In another media campaign that was designed to educate the county about the results of the IYS survey, Geary used images of monkeys with the message, “We can't pretend we don't see the problem.” “When you try to get the message across in a more humorous way, people pay attention and the message comes across in a less

confrontational, less ‘preachy’ way,” Geary said. “We usually get press when we are at an event because we try to have things that generate a buzz of some sort. Generally, the media comes looking for us.”

Geary said it is also important to involve youth in your campaign efforts. For instance, a local radio station recently allowed the coalition to have two hours of free on-air time where local teens discussed drug and alcohol prevention as a way to directly connect to their peers.

Although Geary works within a limited budget and has limited time to dedicate to communications and media outreach, she still elicits a good amount of press for the coalition. “Based on the Illinois Youth Survey results, I know that we're seeing an increase in parental involvement as a result of our campaigns,” stated Geary.



## Tapping into the proper channels

While messaging is important, so is choosing the right channel to reach people, whether it's teens, parents or both. Although many assume that parents and teens cannot be reached through the same channels, a [study by The Nielsen Company](#) showed otherwise. It noted that teens are unique, but they are not as bizarre and outlying as some might presume. Sure, they are the super-communicators and multi-taskers that we hear so much about, but they are also the TV viewers, newspaper readers and radio listeners that some assume they are not. What the Nielsen



Company has found across a variety of studies is that teens embrace new media – not at the cost of traditional media, but in supplement to it. In conclusion, the study determined that teens exhibit media habits that are more similar to the total population than not.

One of the most prominent national anti-drug youth messages comes from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) [Above the Influence](#) (ATI) media campaign. The ATI campaign has become one of the most widely recognized youth brands in the country, with 80 percent of teens aware of ATI advertising. According to an ONDCP report, ATI reached its teen target market with prevention messages appearing in television, radio programs and magazines that reach more than 250 million viewers and readers nationwide. With teens embracing new media every day, ATI is forced to keep the way they reach mass audiences up to par with today's changing media outlets.

Locale is also a consideration when choosing which media channels to use. Erica Roa, alcohol standards specialist for Eastern Illinois University, finds radio stations to be a great avenue for reaching students in the Charleston community. "We use non-paid ads usually ... PSAs for the radio station, as well as promo spots on our local campus station to allow for us to get the word out to local listeners," Roa said.

As one channel may lead to great success, others may be more challenging for an organization. Roa added, "I would have to say that the radio spots have been the best way for us to get the info out. We jumped onto the social media train but have yet to increase our followers to an amount that would make it worthwhile." Experimenting with different media platforms to spread a message will not only determine what works for an intended audience, but also what does not work – devoting more time to focus on successes.

### **One effort, countless impressions**

It is difficult to dispute the benefits of positive media coverage to the prevention field. Not only can it help make the most of an initiative's resources, but it can also be the most efficient way to get information to the largest audience possible in the least amount of time. As with any other prevention effort, the results are often hard to measure but they are known to work. Therefore, prevention organizations would be wise to invest as much effort in this outreach method as their time and budget allows.

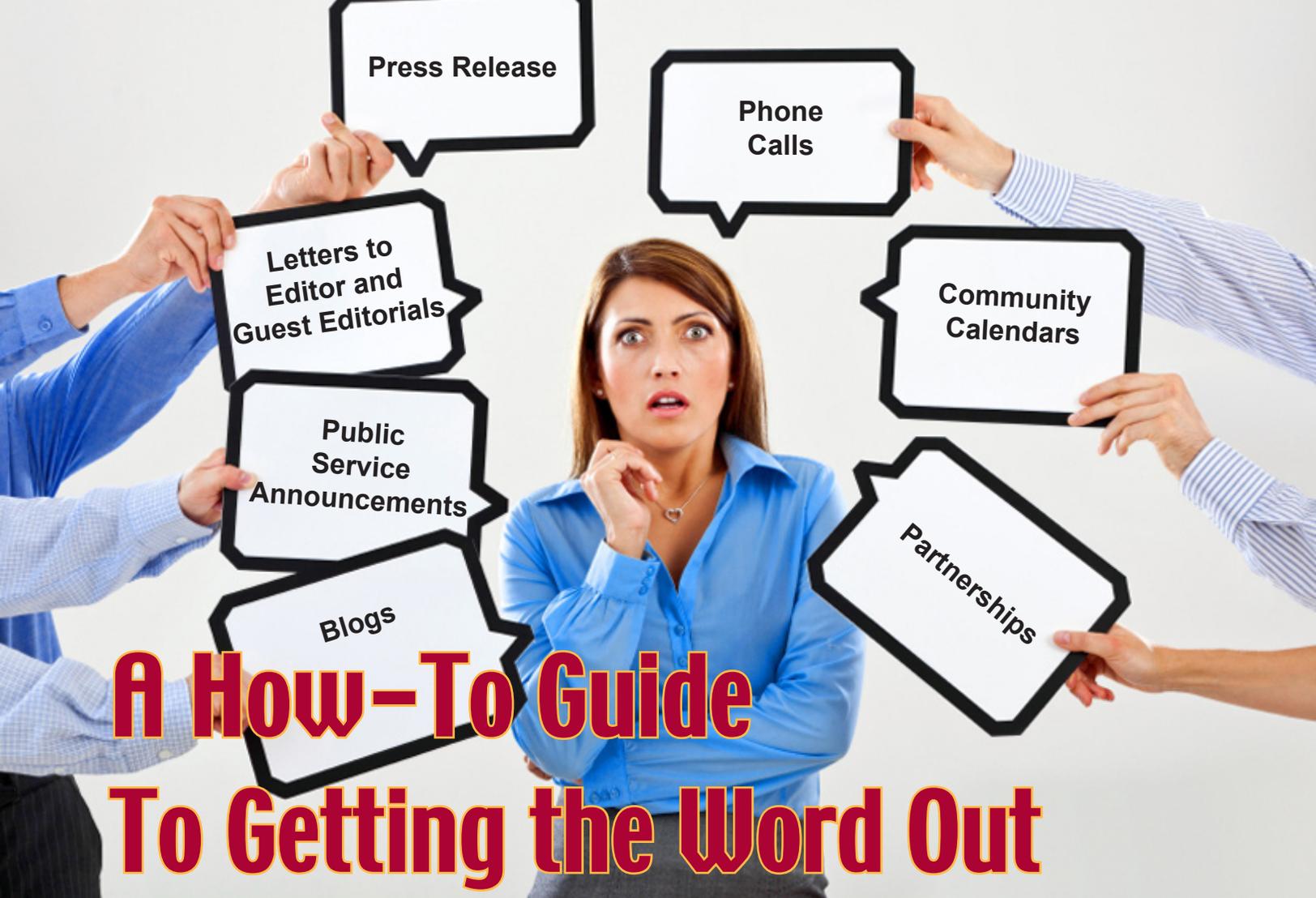
*Ingebrigtsen is a Contributing Editor for Prevention Forum and Shaw is Prevention Forum Managing Editor and Communications Specialist at Prevention First.*

# The Other Side: Newspaper Publisher Offers Advice on How to Get ‘In’

Brant Mackey, publisher of [Springfield Business Journal](#), had worked in the newspaper industry for more than 15 years. In his role as publisher for the community business newspaper, which covers the nonprofit industry in the Springfield area extensively, he offers the following advice to people who are looking to receive media coverage:

1. Meet your media people. If you have not scheduled an appointment with an editor, reporter or newsperson to introduce yourself, then do it. This does NOT need to be a lunch; as a matter of fact, do not try to buy them lunch. It does not even necessarily need to be a face-to-face either. A phone call is good – much better than just an email.
2. Send press releases. These are regular communication of what is going on with you. News people do read them. It also helps to personalize them when you have something particularly special going on. In other words, when I receive a press release through email that includes a personal note (i.e., “Hi Brant. How have you been?”) I am more apt to give it attention.
3. Show respect. Good communications people read publications, listen to local radio talk shows, watch local news, follow local blogs, etc. They subscribe or pick up everything in town. They can speak knowledgeably to news sources about what the media has been covering. It is disappointing when I have news requests from people who have never picked up a copy of our newspaper or have not read an issue in the last few months.
4. Share information freely. The media is in the news business. If you share general information with them, they will value the relationship.
5. Do not always be self-serving. If you hear a story that is genuinely newsworthy but does not necessarily involve your company or organization, then drop a quick email about what you have heard. News people respect and appreciate people who are not always out for themselves. This helps build a relationship.
6. Empower your people. News people do not always want to speak with the communications person – there is a concern that the communications person just wants to put a positive spin on everything (which is, in fact, their job). The media wants access to people within the organization. You need to determine who is capable and willing to speak with the media, and trust and empower them to do it.
7. Always return calls. If you receive a phone call or email request from the media, you should respond as quickly as possible. Make them feel important. Most media are on a deadline and need to speak with sources right away.
8. Do not ask – just inform. “Selling” a story to the media does not work. Journalists are cynical and skeptical by nature. Instead, just provide the information and hope for the best. If you have to try to convince the media to do it in the first place, it most likely is not going to work. It has to be their idea, not yours.





# A How-To Guide To Getting the Word Out

By *Bridget Ingebrigtsen*

Preventionists are often asked by their organizations to fill a variety of roles, one of which entails marketing and media relations efforts. But when your background is in social service and not in communications, reaching out to the media can be a daunting task.

Here is a quick rundown of the things you can do to publicize your mission, news and activities, as well as resources to help you get the job done.

## Public service announcements

According to [press-release-writing.com](http://press-release-writing.com), a public service announcement (PSA) is usually transmitted electronically, via radio or television in a short spot of 10 to 60 seconds. A requirement of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is that stations donate a certain amount of airtime to serve the public and the community. Most public radio and TV stations have a community calendar, for which they will announce events

to the public; health or safety tips are included within this public service requisite. Visit the [Students Against Destructive Decisions website](#) to view sample prevention PSAs.

## Press releases

A press release, or a news release, is a written announcement directed at members of the news media about something claimed as being “newsworthy”. This encourages the journalists to write a news article on the subject, giving you a lot more exposure for free. Press releases can announce scheduled events, awards, accomplishments, new services or even programs. Press releases typically follow a specific format of “who, what, when, where and why.” A sample press release can be found on the [Media College](#) website.

## Phone calls

There are often times when written communication is not even necessary. When an issue or event arises, simply make a call to a local reporter or editor to tell them about it. This is a good way to build a relationship with media outlets – but first, do your

research. The [National Association of City and County Officials](#) recommends taking the time to learn what a reporter writes about and who their audience is before you speak with them. This is very easy to do using the Internet; many papers publicize their circulation. Try to gauge how interested a reporter might



be on your issue based on their coverage of similar issues. Many reporters are fairly knowledgeable in many of the issues you care about; you are more likely to have a different kind of conversation with these reporters than you might with a reporter who covers numerous topics, issues and events.

## Partnerships

Reach out to businesses and organizations in the community and see if there is any place your prevention message would be appropriate. For instance, ask the local library if you can do a display, or ask the park district if you can have a small ad in their programs brochure. Try to be on the lookout for these opportunities, and do not be afraid to ask. Read [Partners in Prevention](#), a report from Prevention Continuum, for more information.

## Letters to the Editor and Guest Editorials

Letters to the editor and guest editorials both provide an opportunity for the public to express individual viewpoints on current issues, but they differ in length and purpose. [The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities](#) notes that letters to the editor provide feedback and comments on issues that have already been noted in a newspaper, magazine or other publication. They are usually limited to 200 words or less, and can be a response to a news story, feature, editorial or another letter. Guest editorials, on the other hand, are more of an open forum and can be a bit longer in length, but should not to exceed 600 words. To view a sample letter to the editor, visit [www.researchamerica.org](http://www.researchamerica.org).

## Community calendars

Search out online, print, radio and television community calendars to post information about upcoming meetings and events.

## Blog

Blogging is the wave of the future. If you can find a staff member or volunteer to do this, you will find it will be well worth the investment. [Getting Attention](#), a website for nonprofit marketers, lists the benefits of nonprofit blogging. The website states that a blog is the absolute, easiest way to provide regularly updated information to an audience. Because the blog creation process and expense is easier and less costly than website creation or print design and production, blogs enable nonprofits to effectively publish a stream of constantly updated, linked and resourceful content at minimal cost. Start your own blog or try to guest blog on community blogs. Check out the [IADDA blog](#) or the [Social Media Technology in Prevention blog](#) for examples.

## Social Media

Social media is changing by the day, but what is not changing is its appeal. Try to get your organization on at least one social media channel, whether it is [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Google+](#). More information about nonprofits and social media can be found on the [Nonprofit Tech 2.0 website](#).

*Ingebrigtsen is a Contributing Editor for Prevention Forum.*

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# Keeping Your Entering Freshman Alcohol and Drug- Free in College



By *Dawne Y. Simmons*

Many families have spent the last 17 or 18 years getting ready for this moment – their son or daughter is graduating from high school and transitioning to college. It is an exciting time. Young people look forward to less parental supervision, no curfew, more independence and the opportunity to meet new people and try new things.

However, it can also be a scary time ... for many of the same reasons. Having less parental supervision and no curfew means that young adults have to start making many decisions on their own without their family's influence. With more freedom, and the opportunity to meet new people and try new things, college freshmen may be encouraged to experiment with substances – such as alcohol or other drugs – that they may have avoided in the past. Yet, according to Rose Garlasco, assistant principal for students at Maine South High School in Park Ridge, Illinois, students still have to deal with peer pressure and a desire to fit in with the group. She explained, “On the developmental level, some are still not ready for all that freedom. Because they're only 17 or 18 years old, they may not have all the internal resources that can help them make better decisions.”

## Transitioning to college is more than just academics

Helping high school seniors successfully transition to college requires more than just academic preparation. They must be prepared for the social scene as well. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA) initiative, [College Drinking: Changing the Culture](#), the penalties for college drinking can be life altering. A few statistics, gathered from the initiative's [website](#), depict just how life altering these consequences can be:

- **Death:** About 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related

unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes.

- **Injury:** Nearly 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are unintentionally injured under the influence of alcohol.
- **Police Involvement:** About five percent of four-year college students are involved with the police or campus security as a result of their drinking. An estimated 110,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are arrested for an alcohol-related violation such as public drunkenness or driving under the influence.

There are legal consequences for underage drinking while in college, too. According to Officer Shawn Johnson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Police Department, the repercussions for underage drinking can occur whether on or off campus. “On campus,” he explains, “underage drinking is a violation of the housing contract, student conduct code and often, local and state laws. Disciplines and punishments range from having fines assessed, administrative sanctions, and cancellation of the housing contract all the way to the issuance of arrest warrants with court appearances.”

The consequences also extend off-campus. “Someone who is underage and has been drinking can get involved in bar fights, be responsible for criminal property damage, or be the victim of an assault,” said Johnson. “The arrest record from such activity can follow students when they apply for internships, summer jobs or that first job after college. And whether or not driving is involved, underage drinkers can have their licenses suspended by the Secretary of State,” he explained. “My fellow officers at campuses all across the state take this issue very seriously,” he said.

## Teens who live a healthy lifestyle

On learning about the social, physical and legal consequences of underage drinking and illicit drug use, some parents may be tempted to breathe a sigh of relief because their high

school seniors have already adopted a drug and alcohol-free lifestyle. Don't relax too soon. According to the [NIAAA](#), while in high school, college-bound students often demonstrate a tendency to drink less or avoid it altogether when compared to their non-college-bound peers. However once out of high school, the situation reverses with greater numbers of college students – even freshmen – drinking more than their non-college attending peers. According to the website [CollegeDrinkingPrevention.gov](#), “Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first six weeks of enrollment are critical to first-year student success. Because many students initiate heavy drinking during these early days of college, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life.”

Families have ample reason to be concerned. Last year, the [Cook County Sheriff's office](#), in collaboration with Chicago Customs and Border Protection agency, intercepted shipments of fake IDs from China. The majority of the false identification cards, which were of a high quality, were addressed to underage teens in the Chicago metropolitan area, specifically for students attending colleges and universities across the Midwest. One of the most common reasons to obtain a fake ID is to engage in underage drinking.

## Social norms – it's not always about the party

The NIAAA's initiative has looked at social norms campaigns as a way to help change the culture of college drinking. [CollegeDrinkingPrevention.gov](#) reports, “Nearly half of the 747 four-year residential colleges and universities surveyed in a 2002 study reported having implemented a social norms campaign.” A social norms campaign attempts to better align the perception of drinking and drug use with the reality of such use. Usually, surveys find that students overestimate the use of alcohol by their peers. “Not everybody that goes to college drinks or uses drugs,” said Garlasco. She adds, “There are lots of things at universities that support healthy lifestyle choices.”

An [Illinois Core Alcohol and Drug](#) study bears that out. Surveying more than 11,000 students across 33 college and university campuses, the 2004 study found that most (76 percent) college students drank responsibly, with more than a third (36 percent) not drinking at all. However, the same study found that students who participate in high risk or irresponsible drinking had a negative effect on the school environment. All of which means that students who do not drink or use drugs have a responsibility to stand up for an alcohol and drug-free campus.

## What can parents and family members do?

Officer Johnson wants parents to start conversations with their young adults before attending college. A few questions to jumpstart the discussion include:

- How will you decide not to drink at college?
- What will you do if you find yourself at a party with only

beer or wine to drink?

- What will you do if you find someone passed out?
- How will you respond when someone asks you to keep an eye on someone who has had too much to drink?

“These are the kinds of questions that parents can ask to get students thinking about situations and how they will be handled before students get to campus,” he said. Johnson wants parents to encourage their teens to take advantage of all of the alcohol-free activities and other resources that are available at most colleges. “Universities have a lot of non-alcoholic events and students don't have to look hard to find them. They can participate in activities like movie nights, ice cream socials or game nights in the dorms. They can take part in volunteer activities, join committees that provide alternatives to traditional spring break groups, and faith-based groups that often sponsor non-alcoholic activities. There's a lot to do to have fun and not drink,” Johnson said. “Young people have to remember that a college campus is part of the real world, it's not a bubble. Whatever students did to stay alcohol and drug-free at home, they can follow a similar routine on campus.”

Although high school seniors and college freshmen may be considered legal adults at the age of 18, Johnson believes that parents still have a great deal of influence on the decision their children make. “It's quite common for a student picked up for underage drinking to ask, ‘Are you going to call my Mom or Dad?’” said Johnson. That is why he urges parents to reinforce their expectations of their teens and to be clear about their family values. He wants parents to encourage students to attend the safety talks held by universities. These talks help students understand the college environment, and to be aware of safety issues that go beyond alcohol or drugs, like theft and personal safety.

“The choices that young people have to make never ends,” said Garlasco. “They will always be presented with issues around drugs and alcohol, even those kids who made the choice for a healthy lifestyle. Parents need to be supportive of that choice,” she explained.

Because of his role as a campus police officer, Johnson emphasizes personal safety, healthy lifestyle and general awareness of their surroundings as students transition to college. He adds, “College can be a great time in one's life. I want students to be safe, have fun, meet new people, be open to new opportunities, use good judgment and enjoy college.”

*Simmons is a Contributing Editor for Prevention Forum.*

### Sources:

<http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Key-Findings-PATS-2010-FINAL.pdf>

<http://www.higheredcenter.org/resources/guide-parents-first-year-college-students>

<http://www.eiu.edu/ibec/2012%20parent%20brochure-revised.pdf>

# DomeShift 2012 Offers the ATI Experience



By *Laura Shaw*

On April 17-18, 2012, hundreds of youth from across the state gathered in Springfield to take part in DomeShift 2012, an advocacy day presented by the Illinois Teen Safe Driving Coalition, Illinois Drug Education Alliance (IDEA), Illinois Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and Prevention First.

In its second year, the DomeShift and Youth Advocacy Day events offer students the opportunity to receive training in advocacy, meet statewide lawmakers at the Capitol to educate them about teen traffic safety and distracted driving, underage drinking, social media and cyber bullying, or to thank them for their continued support on issues affecting youth today. This year, over 200 students participated in the two-day event, doubling attendance from DomeShift 2011.

Not only did attendance increase, but also the Illinois Student Advisory Board had a much bigger presence than in years past. Robyn Block, SADD statewide coordinator, appointed her Student Advisory Board (SAB), a group of 12 teens from around Illinois who keep on top of the latest buzz and trends of drugs and alcohol among teens, as DomeShift 2012's activity organizers and facilitators. "I met with them, but they were the ones in charge of running the workshops and picking the speakers," Block said.

The SAB presented a workshop called "A Day in the Life", which took an in-depth look at daily stress, signs and symptoms of depression and touched on the subject of teen suicide. Students left with a better understanding of stressors and the need to be open and honest and to seek help when needed.

An important added attraction was the participation of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) "Above the Influence" (ATI) campaign. ATI is a national prevention campaign that informs and inspires teens to reject illicit drugs. Since 2010, ATI has collaborated with more than 80 local community partners in more than 45 cities across the country, including Illinois SADD and Prevention First. The campaign captures the attention of youth by challenging them to think critically about the adverse effects of drug use and the potential negative influences surrounding them in their social and media environments.

Mark Krawczyk, acting director of ONDCP's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, along with a team of others,

provided students with the ATI Experience. Students participated in the "Be It" and "Tag It" activities.

The "Tag It" activity asks teens to literally tag the influences in their lives and share them with the world. The activity builds "influence literacy" and gets teens to recognize the power of influence. It also hints at empowerment – providing a tangible way to say, "I see it, and I'm above it."

The "Be It" activity asks teens to create their own personal slogan – a short statement that captures who they are and how they live their lives to stay above negative influences.

"'Tag It' made me realize how much I've achieved," stated Aundrea Marsh, a sophomore at Taylorville High School. "The last two days were amazing and a true learning experience," said Marsh. "I feel very empowered."

"We are thrilled to have representatives from ONDCP at this year's DomeShift," said Block. "Being able to partner with a national anti-drug youth prevention effort like ATI offers us a valuable resource and the opportunity to expose our kids to more prevention messaging."



To view more photos from DomeShift 2012, visit [www.facebook.com/PreventionFirst](http://www.facebook.com/PreventionFirst).

Krawczyk also recognized SADD student member, JD Oeters and his slogan "Be True, Be You" as ATI's Illinois' "Be It" activity winning slogan. Oeters' slogan has been featured on billboards in the Springfield area since April 9, 2012.

For more information about DomeShift 2012 and the supporting organizations, visit [Illinois Teen Safe Driving Coalition](#), [Illinois Drug Education Alliance \(IDEA\)](#), [Illinois Students Against Destructive Decisions \(SADD\)](#) or [Prevention First](#).



# P r e v e n t i o n Spotlight

By *Dawne Y. Simmons*

*The following is a highlight of prevention efforts by coalitions, schools, social service agencies, community prevention professionals and many others who are working toward ATOD prevention awareness statewide. If you have similar news items to share, please email [communications@prevention.org](mailto:communications@prevention.org).*

## Project Sticker Shock Highlights Underage Drinking

For the fourth consecutive year, Project Sticker Shock fanned out across the state on April 20 with the message: *Providing Alcohol to Minors is Illegal, Unhealthy and Unacceptable*. Teens, police officers, public officials, prevention professionals and community members visited businesses that serve or sell alcohol, and encouraged them to post decals and posters to remind adults about the penalties of providing minors with alcohol. The Illinois Liquor Control Commission sponsors Project Sticker Shock, and partners with organizations such as [Prevention First](#), Illinois Restaurant Association, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, among many others.



Sources: *Illinois Liquor Control Commission press release, Kane County Chronicle, NewsChannel ABC 20*

## Morris Community High School Considers Drug Testing

Athletes and students involved in extracurricular activities may soon undergo random drug testing for illegal drugs or controlled substances. The Morris Community High School District 101 is considering instituting this program as part of its drug prevention efforts. According to the article in the *Morris Daily Herald*, the proposed testing is not due to any increased drug use, but an additional way to help prevent drug use. The district's disciplinary committee placed a survey on

the high school's website to garner feedback on the proposal by students, parents and community members. The Morris Community High School community had until mid-March to complete the survey. The disciplinary district plans to make a recommendation to the board by the end of the school year.

Source: *Morris Daily Herald*

## Teen Leaders Sought for Drug Prevention Institute

The Illinois Teen Institute is holding its annual Youth Leadership Conference on July 22-26, 2012 at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington. The conference is a leadership development and substance abuse prevention program that is open to any Illinois high school student who is:

- A freshman, sophomore, junior or senior in the 2012-13 school year and is younger than 18 years of age
- Alcohol, tobacco and drug free
- Wanting to serve as a youth leader and prevention resource in his or her high school, neighborhood or community
- Willing to reach out to others and values diversity



The weeklong conference includes highly interactive leadership development activities with students from across the state, motivating speakers and other fun-filled events. Participants receive lodging, a T-shirt, workshop materials, recreational activities and meals. Transportation is not included. Scholarships may be available from various organizations across the state. For more information about the summer Youth Leadership Conference and/or scholarship availability, contact the [Illinois Teen Institute](#) or call the Illinois Alcohol and Drug Dependence Association (IADDA) at 800.252.6301, ext. 16.

Source: *OS/ITI website, Illinois Sheriff's Association press release*



*To keep abreast of current news in the fields of drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention and treatment, sign-up for your FREE subscription to Join Together Daily News, a daily e-newsletter from the Partnership at Drugfree.org. Visit <http://www.drugfree.org/newsletters> for more information.*

*Mass Communication* can be defined as the dissemination of information to a large group of people at the same time. For most of us, that means using traditional media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines. Today we must include “new media”, like the Internet, and “social media”, such as Facebook and Twitter. That is a lot of real estate to cover.

We want to reach as many people as possible with our message. Others, also representing worthy organizations and causes, are in competition for the same space. How we approach our objective will often determine who wins.

*BUILD* is an acronym that encompasses objectives for establishing and maintaining relationships with key “gatekeepers” who have the power to assist or thwart you. Here is how it breaks out:

- B - Be a continuing resource for the media.** This is accomplished by:
- Being relevant and reliable – Provide information that is meaningful and important.
  - Being dependable – Be available when needed, returning phone calls and emails promptly. Arrive prepared and on time.
  - Being respectful – Honor the media’s time. Learn what they deem newsworthy.
  - Being available – Be aware of deadlines. Let your media contacts know that you are available for them as a resource.

- U - Unify, Utilize and Update**
- Unify your messages – Make certain that your message stays on track with your organization’s mission and objectives.
  - Utilize your skills – You know what your strengths are. Use them to your best advantage.
  - Update your media contact list on a regular basis.

- I - Inform, Illuminate, Impress and Improve**
- Inform your audience – Always provide useful information.
  - Illuminate – Shed light on an issue, opportunity, etc. Remember, you are the expert.
  - Impress – People want to like you. Your knowledge, unique style and personality will enhance your credibility.
  - Improve – Constantly hone your skills and expand your knowledge. Every meeting you have with the media is a learning experience.

- L - Listen and Learn**
- Listen – Listening will help you serve as your community’s ears. You will be on top of the media “buzz” around town, and that can help you tailor your message.
  - Learn about your media contacts’ needs – Understand the formats they prefer (i.e.;mtape, DVD, CD JPG, MPG), deadlines, sizes and what they deem newsworthy.

- D - Develop and Deliver**
- Develop key talking points – Prepare a short summary that quickly and simply defines your organization and its value proposition.
  - Develop a system for keeping in touch – Communicate with your media contacts on a regular basis.
  - Develop ongoing relationships
  - Deliver – Media is a time sensitive business. If you are asked to provide something (i.e.; specific information, PSAs, etc.) make sure you provide it on time.

The points spelled out in BUILD are intended to provide an ongoing way of staying connected and on-message – key elements in developing and maintaining fruitful relationships with the media. They do not guarantee success, but there is no substitute for hard work, determination and perseverance.

Steve Cline  
Deputy Director Field Operations, The Partnership at Drugfree.org

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## Mission

*To provide statewide leadership in promoting healthy, drug-free families and communities.*

## Vision

*Individuals, families, organizations, communities and policymakers engage in effective prevention practices and support policies that promote healthy lifestyles.*



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