

HELPING HAND

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Teach Students Responsibility Today for Success Tomorrow

They've been raised in an age of excess consumption, where plastic surgery and flashy cars are doled out as high school graduation gifts. Some experts say catering to kids' self-esteem instead of teaching them about responsibility has left them poorly equipped to deal with adulthood. Armed with cell phones, laptops and their parents' cash, they have a sense of entitlement like no generation before them. Many have never rolled up their sleeves for physical labor or held a job. And the number of teens working summer jobs this year is the lowest since the government started collecting data back in 1948—only 39.6% of American teens aged 16 to 19 worked summer jobs this year, according to the Department of Labor.

While the same research also showed more students enrolled in school over the summer, many parents are frustrated. They lament their children's expectations of having everything handed to them. Fueled by reality TV shows that feature decadent lifestyles and Sweet 16 birthday parties that rival the lavishness of royal weddings, many kids believe the good things in life should be theirs for the taking—with no concept of actually working for them.

Dr. Terry Noble, a self-made success story and author of the new book, *Starting at Sea Level*, (Foggy River Books, 2007)



shares the parents' concerns. He believes today's generation would benefit from doing some *real* work. "My father taught me to work and gave me responsibility as soon as I was ready to handle it," says Noble. "By age 9, I was feeding 5,000 chickens daily. At 14, I was operating a 31' commercial crab boat. At 16, I owned a farming operation and was saving for college. What I learned from him allowed me to retire at 52."

Noble believes teaching work ethic and responsibility at a young age can instill lifelong values, as children and teens benefit in many ways from work. They learn responsibility, prepare for future jobs, and earn their own incomes. Noble believes there's another benefit to teaching kids physical labor such as yard work, caring for animals and helping with chores: reducing childhood obesity. "I understand the world has changed since I was a kid," says Noble. "But there's always some work that can be done around the house or yard, or for the neighbors or at a local, small business. Getting kids off the sofa and performing age-appropriate tasks can help burn calories and improve their physical health. Plus, it gives them a sense of accomplishment that sports can't provide."

That sense of accomplishment is often the prime motivator many kids need. Noble points to the satisfaction he felt when he began raising livestock to pay his way through college. "I gained a sense of worthiness by earning my own money," says Noble.

Are Girls Who Drink More Promiscuous? Perception Is Not Always Reality

Teens' perceptions of adolescent girls' flirtatiousness are based on what girls are drinking, as well as what their romantic male partners are drinking, according to a new University of Michigan study.

U-M researchers explore the commonly-held myth that women who excessively drink alcohol are promiscuous, aggressive, and unreliable. Previous research has documented that men and women commonly believe in this misconception, despite the findings indicating that women's sexual interest is diminished by alcohol.

"We know that such myths contribute to the high rate of sexual assault among women because they lead to misperceptions about women's true intentions," said Amy Young, lead author and assistant research scientist at U-M's Institute for Research on Women and Gender (IRWG). "We thought it was important to determine whether adolescents hold these beliefs, too, given that adolescent girls have the highest rate of sexual assault."

Young collaborated on the paper with Sean McCabe, a research associate professor at the U-M Substance Abuse Center, and IRWG Director Carol Boyd, a professor of nursing and women's studies.

The study surveyed 1,463 students in grades six through 11 in an urban public school district. Students were presented with a vignette, in which a male and a female character are socializing at a party. In some of the stories, the characters are drinking soda; in others, they are drinking beer and are intoxicated. Students were randomly selected to receive stories with soda- or beer-drinking characters. They were asked about their perceptions of the characters and the responses were compared based on soda- or beer-drinking stories.

Prevention efforts should target youth, such as teaching them how to

critically view media images, Young said. The media associates certain gender characteristics with alcohol consumption. Men are perceived as demonstrating control and masculinity, while women are considered promiscuous. Children see these images and develop beliefs about men and women who drink, well before they may start to drink alcohol.

"Prevention efforts that occur prior to adolescence can be particularly effective because children are more receptive to messages from adults than adolescents are," Young said.

Secondary Students Say Drugs Are Used, Kept, or Sold, at Their Schools

According to information released recently by *CESAR Fax*, from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, the majority of high school students report that they have personally witnessed drug-related activity at their school, according to a recent survey. Eighty percent of high school students and 44% of middle school students reported that they personally had witnessed one or more of the following on the grounds of their schools: 1) illegal drugs used; 2) illegal drugs sold; 3) illegal drugs in the possession of students (either on them or in their lockers); 4) students high on drugs; 5) students who were drunk. Furthermore, 31% of high school students and 9% of middle school students reported seeing such conduct at least once a week (data not shown). The authors suggest that "until we rid our children's middle and high schools of drugs, we will never be able to achieve the improvements in academic achievements (and test scores) considered essential to maintain our global competitiveness." (Source: *CESAR Fax*).

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Sex, Drugs and Alcohol Are Popular Teen Topics Online

Parents who think their teens' online conversations with their peers are innocent may want to reconsider. A new Caron Treatment Centers qualitative study conducted by Nielsen BuzzMetrics found that one in 10 messages analyzed involved teens seeking advice from their peers on how to take illicit drugs "safely" and without getting caught. The messages were posted on common online message boards, forums and social networks, such as MySpace.com, ym.com and teenspot.com, among others.

The study also found that in messages about alcohol, hooking up and having sex when drinking were the top behaviors discussed by teens. While a few teens expressed regret over things they did while drunk, many chalked them up to "fun," "being wasted" and "having a good time." While both genders discussed hooking up and sex, more girls than boys talked about it, where gender was identifiable.

More than 160,000 of the 10.3 million messages posted by teens were about drugs or alcohol. Despite increased focus on drug trends, such as abuse of prescription medications like OxyContin and club favorites like Ecstasy, less "trendy" substances were more commonly discussed. Almost 80% of the drug-related messages posted by teens mentioned alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and acid/LSD.

"While much attention has been given to adult sexual predators preying on teens online, it's important for parents to know conversations with peers can be equally dangerous," said David Rotenberg, executive director of Adolescent Services at Caron, the industry's leading authority on adolescent addiction treatment.

Tips for Managing Teens' Online Behavior:

Keep the Computer Where You Can See It: It's easier to casually keep an eye on your teen's online use when the computer is in a common area rather than a private bedroom.

Get Educated About the Internet: The more you understand what's going on in cyberspace, the better equipped you'll be to talk with your teen about his online conversations. Learn what's available to your teens online, such as social networking sites (including Facebook and MySpace), message boards (including teenspot.com and student.com) and helpful services (including drugfree.org). Visit Caron's "teen speak" glossary, www.caron.org, which can help you stay updated on the lingo for alcohol and drug use.

Web-Surfing Is a Privilege: Define the rules, concerns and expectations for online activities with your teen. Set limits on Internet usage and alert your teen that you'll regularly ask her to walk you through her recent online activity.

Keep Checking In: Have regular conversations with your teen about what he does when he's online. Discuss his screen name(s) and any sites he regularly visits or does postings. Let him know you're always available to talk.

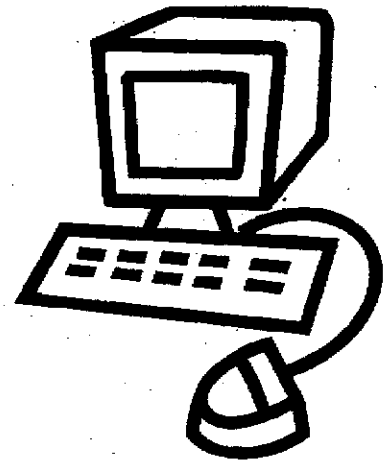
Explain That the Virtual World Lives On: It is becoming common for employers and colleges/universities to research online behavior of prospects, so let your teen know that whatever she says or does online will likely have a long virtual shelf-life.

Teach Teens How to Deal With Peer Pressure: Explain that, just like in real life, "virtual" conversations can become uncomfortable or inappropriate. Discuss examples of how your teen might respond to a conversation or posting that turns to drugs or alcohol.

Be Aware of Signs: Signs that your child could be engaging in inappropriate or dangerous behavior online include closing a screen quickly when you walk by, becoming distressed if you remove computer privileges, and difficulty waking up for school because of late-night online activity.

Consider Monitoring or Filtering: Excellent software exists today that can monitor every keystroke and give you regular reports about your teen's virtual behavior. Filtering programs also allow you to block teens from visiting sites that wouldn't be appropriate under any circumstances. Caron's student assistance professionals suggest Spector Pro for monitoring software and Net Nanny or Kidsnet.com for filtering software.

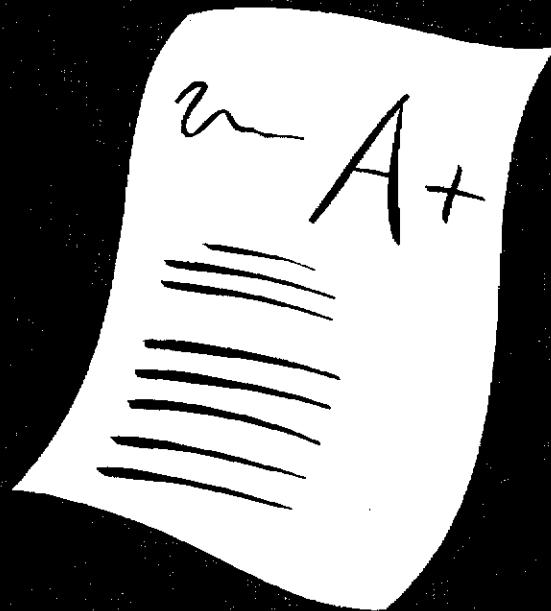
Make It a Community Effort: You may want to set up a town hall meeting in your community with other relevant voices to discuss this issue. For more information, contact Caron's Student Assistance Program, www.caron.org.



Tips for Parents to Encourage Student Success All Year Long

By Michele LoBosco

- 1. Create a safe space to communicate.** Let your child know you are available for him and willing to discuss any concerns, and process any negative feelings, right from the start of the school year. Continue to offer communication opportunities all year long.
- 2. Create an environment at home that models a love of learning.** It is important to role-model the behaviors we seek in our children. Not only does this create trust and respect between parent and child, it sets the stage for the development of effective and positive habits. Students who have parents who read are more likely to read. Parents who enjoy lively and friendly debates on books and current events create an environment that will, likely, foster a love of discussion and learning.
- 3. Provide your child with all the tools she needs to stay organized throughout the year.** Before a semester gets too hectic, be sure to provide your child with all the organizational tools she might need. A day calendar or a chalkboard (that is hung in a convenient place in your home) on which your child can write all of her upcoming assignments, quizzes and school activities can help provide an organizational support system that serves to help her address and meet her school responsibilities throughout the year.
- 4. Provide academic support.** Students who have one or more parents involved in their education are more likely to do well in school. Ask your child if there are ways you can be of assistance, and try to be as available and supportive to his needs as possible. If your schedule is too busy, find out if there are tutoring or after-school assistance programs available in your neighborhood, and support your child by providing him with some one-on-one academic support.



Michele LoBosco founded Academics Plus Tutoring Center with her sister, Dr. Jacqueline LoBosco, in 2007.

For more information, contact:

**For more information on Student Assistance
(drug and violence prevention) programming in
Chippewa Valley Schools, please contact,
586/723-2360.**