

Youth Peer-to-Peer Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Recovery Support Program Featured at Capitol

Who: Representatives Tom Drew, Andres Ayala, Christopher Caruso, Don Clemons, Auden Grogins, Jack Hennessy, Chris Lyddy, Kelvin Roldan, and Ezequiel Santiago are inviting legislators, policy makers, service providers and other members of the public to attend this program to learn about this very successful model.

What: Central High School students from Bridgeport will be at the Capitol to share their very successful experience in its Peer-To-Peer Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Recovery Support Program. The program is being held with the intention of creating statewide awareness of this cost effective and successful model developed at Central High School.

Where: Legislative Office Building, Room 2D, Hartford Connecticut

When: Wednesday March 17th 10:30 am -12:30 pm

State Legislators will be met at the front door by bright smiling youth in graduation attire at the Capitol on **Wednesday March 17, 2010 from 10:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M., in Room 2D** of the **Legislative Office Building**. They will be asking legislators to further investigate as one youth said “cranking it up a notch.” The more youth we can save the better the State’s budget will be.

State Representative Thomas Drew (D-132) extended the invitation, believing it was important for his fellow legislators, policy makers, service providers and others to learn about this incredibly successful program, and most importantly provide them an opportunity to hear from the students whose lives have been changed for the better because of it.

It is a well-researched fact that most kids in trouble listen to their peers, about alcohol and drug use. Yet even though the State is in a tight budget crisis, it seems it would be a “no brainer” for the General Assembly to take a little time to look into how one inner city high school in Connecticut is helping 500 students stay clean and sober, attend school, get good grades, and stay out of trouble with the law. “Pay early or defer payment and pay millions when more kids drop out of school, struggle with addiction, and end up in our legal or social service system,” says Donna Aligata, Executive Director of Connecticut Turning To Youth and Families.

Recent statistics from The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration say it costs our society \$510.8 billion nation-wide for drug and alcohol related problems

much of which is preventable. School-based prevention efforts average just \$220 per student with medium returns of \$18 per each \$1 invested (Substance Abuse Prevention Dollars and Cents: A Cost-Benefit Analysis, 2008). This means that The Peer-to-Peer Leadership Group at Central High School in Bridgeport has just saved Connecticut and local communities approximately \$1.98 million dollars with their successful peer-to-peer prevention and recovery support program.

The group was started in 2005 by Steve Karjanis and Dave Gordon, with only 3 students; now more than 500 students attend one of the 20 groups offered each week, a true testament of their success. The Leadership Group has created a positive culture change in the school by empowering students to help other students live alcohol and drug free and creating an attitude of: "It's cool to be sober." Thanks to documentary videos (can be viewed online at: www.ctyouthandfamilies.org) and social media The Peer-to-Peer results they are having are no longer a secret and schools around the country have been calling to find out how they can get the same results. New Bedford High School in Massachusetts in conjunction with the Juvenile Justice Reclaiming Futures Project is sending their guidance department to Central High School to see how they do what they do first hand.

Young people will listen to other young people; it's positive peer pressure. "The Leadership Group helps the students move forward. It's important to strike a balance between the social and the academic; you need both in place to succeed," says Principal Alex Ortiz.

When money is lacking, sometimes it is the perfect time to look into trying something totally different. Please join us to witness Peer-to-Peer Results changing cultures in schools on **Wednesday, March 17, 2010 from 10:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M., in Room 2D of the Legislative Office Building.** For more information visit www.ctyouthandfamilies.org or call CTYF at 860-838-3553.

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ABOUT THE EVENT COORDINATORS

The event has been planned and coordinated by a coalition that includes the following partners:

Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families (CTYF), The Greater Bridgeport Adolescent Pregnancy Program (GBAPP), Liberation Programs Inc., Regional Network of Programs, Inc. (RNP), Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport (CGCGB), Regional Youth Adult Substance Abuse Program (RYASAP), Connecticut Renaissance, Inc., Optimus Health Care Inc., The Southwest Community Health Center.

About Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families

Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families (CTYF) is a statewide organization established to strengthen Connecticut's prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for youth and families. Utilizing the power of youth and families with their own stories, CTYF offers programs and services that are natural recovery support for other youth and families. CTYF has provided a place to turn for information, strength, and help growing youth and family recovery efforts in Connecticut's communities. Visit www.ctyouthandfamilies.org for more information.

About The Greater Bridgeport Adolescent Pregnancy Program

The mission of GBAPP is to decrease pregnancy and early parenthood in adolescents, and reduce sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS in children, youth, women and men in the Bridgeport area through direct service delivery, including outreach, counseling, prevention education and case management, and coordination of services, resource development, training and advocacy.

About Liberation Programs

Liberation Programs is a substance abuse healthcare agency based in Stamford, providing treatment and prevention services throughout Fairfield County. Liberation Programs demonstrates daily that substance use disorders can be treated successfully. With four decades of behavioral health expertise, we recognize that each person's recovery is unique. We are committed to finding recovery solutions that work, and to customizing treatment plans to match individual need. The Liberation Team caters to our area's poor and working poor with service offerings for older adults, men, women, mothers (pregnant or parenting) and teens; approximately 1,200 people are served each day.

About Regional Network of Programs, Inc.

Regional Network of Programs, Inc. is a private, non-profit behavioral health provider serving Connecticut. Its primary mission is to serve the economically disadvantaged/afflicted person by using a variety of individualized and diversified approaches to person-centered care. Today, the Organization's scope of services provided a continuum of care in the following areas: methadone maintenance, individual and group drug and alcohol counseling, substance abuse and mental health education, information and referral, a variety of counseling programs for young and adults; facilities for individuals recovering from psychiatric disorders and a wide range of housing options for the homeless.

About Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport

The vision of Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport is to be a child centered, Family focused and Community based agency that offers a continuum of quality behavioral health to children under the age of 18 and to their families. The mission of the organization is to promote positive child development and the emotional well-being of children as well as to empower families to provide a nurturing, caring and safe haven for children to grow and to mature. Our professional staff is trained to offer you the highest quality care that is accessible and culturally sensitive.

About Regional Youth Adult Substance Abuse Program (RYASAP)

RYASAP is an urban/suburban youth and community development coalition serving the Greater Bridgeport region, comprised of Bridgeport, Easton/Redding, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull with local and statewide programs in juvenile justice advocacy, young adult leadership, and asset based youth community development training and consultation.

About Connecticut Renaissance, Inc.

Since 1967 Connecticut Renaissance has provided quality substance abuse and mental health treatment to men, women, and adolescents throughout the state of Connecticut. Through programs run by a compassionate, committed, results-oriented team of counselors, therapists and administrators, Renaissance has earned the reputation as a leader in Evidence-Based Treatment practices, and continues to break new ground in the areas of positive outcomes, outreach, research, and community action. Headquartered in Bridgeport, Renaissance maintains facilities in Waterbury, Norwalk, Bridgeport, Stamford and Bloomfield. Our mission is to help people begin the journey toward recovery from mental health and/or substance abuse issues and to assist in improving their quality of life. At Renaissance, our ultimate goal is to assist clients, their families and significant others to lead happy, healthy and productive lives.

About Optimus Health Care Inc.

Optimus Health Care, formerly Bridgeport Community Health Center, Inc., is the largest provider of primary health care services in Southwestern CT. With 12 service delivery sites located in the Cities of Bridgeport and Stamford, and the Town of Stratford, we provide comprehensive health care services to everyone, regardless of race, income and insurance status. We will provide you and your family the best quality of care! We are a private non-profit organization operating 12 JCAHO accredited community health centers, including health care centers for the homeless, a walk-in primary care center, dental clinics, and general family health practice.

About The Southwest Community Health Center

Southwest Community Health Center, Inc. continually strives to improve the scope and quality of services offered to meet the unique needs of the Bridgeport communities we serve. In addition to the comprehensive range of primary medical, dental and behavioral health services described in the following pages, Southwest provides community outreach, health education/disease prevention programs, and entitlement enrollment services. The Health Center's physicians are Board Certified and provide hospital and after hours coverage to ensure continuity of care. Continuing its tradition of excellence, Southwest earned full accreditation from the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (Joint Commission).