

A Letter from DAET:

Spring is finally here. This time of year is often thought of as a time for new beginnings and opportunities. Perhaps a chance to take stock in what is important and taking steps to prioritize those things that makes us happy and healthy. If you are familiar with Decisions at Every Turn, you are aware of our mission to prevent and reduce substance use among Ashland youth. The Coalition does this by raising awareness, providing education, and increasing knowledge and skills to promote the protective factors and reduce the risk factors that may contribute to youth use. Supporting mental health is a critical component of these efforts. This is why we are so pleased to be active in recognizing Mental Health Awareness Month (MHAM) in May. For the third consecutive year, DAET is working with community partners to provide educational opportunities, resources, and information to support youth mental health and community-wide engagement to recognize the importance of mental health for ALL of us. Page 2 is dedicated to Mental Health Awareness Month, including tips for talking with your kids & teens about mental health and information on our month-long recognition of MHAM. If you have a moment, think about the things that are important to you. We hope that the MHAM resources are helpful in prioritizing the health & happiness of you and your family.

~ Kristin & Eliza

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Greetings from the Volunteer Corner! My name is Liz Colvin, and it's my pleasure to bring you news about DAET volunteer activities. I'm going to highlight just some of the many recent activities where volunteers have played an active role in helping the Coalition have an impact in the community.

In October 2022, DAET partnered with the Ashland Police Department to host Hidden in Plain Sight at the Ashland High School Library. Hidden in Plain Sight is an interactive display of a typical teen bedroom to help parents and other caring adults identify opportunities and learn strategies to start meaningful conversations with their tweens and teens about substance use and abuse. Volunteers helped plan and organize the event and greeted guests.

In December 2022, DAET hosted a book read event for parents and their elementary aged children at the Ashland Senior Center. The highlight of the evening was when DAET members and volunteers read passages from *Lelia's Aventura*, a children's book that emphasized the sharing of feelings between children and family members. The better equipped families are at sharing their feelings early in children's lives, the better prepared they are for pre-adolescence and coping with age appropriate challenges. It was obvious that the children enjoyed the story.

Coalition members and community stakeholders gathered for their virtual winter meeting in January, 2023. I was impressed with the comprehensive scope of programs and specific goals included in the Action Plan. Equally impressive was the level of dedication and commitment to the well-being of Ashland youth that DAET members and stakeholders demonstrated. I feel honored to support this important mission alongside such compassionate people.

Our goal is to reach all Ashland middle and high school youth. We conduct events and partner with students, staff, and student-led groups such as SADD and the Ashland Youth Coalition. I can attest from my volunteer experiences that our young people are engaged and motivated to reduce youth substance use and abuse. It is inspiring to witness.

In order to reach as many Ashland parents as we can, we are present at many town events during the year too, and we need volunteers like you to ensure these events are successful! We regularly attend school open houses, Ashland Day, Ashland Farmer's Market and the Holiday Stroll. We produce targeted social media campaigns and inserts in Ashland Town Pages.

Our volunteers are motivated by many reasons: Irene Ostrow is one of our volunteers from Ashland, who describes herself as having a lifelong healthy lifestyle. Her interest in being involved with DAET stems from her desire for her grandsons to make sensible choices to also have healthy lifestyles. She feels this is not only important for them, but for the youth of the community she lives in. Please consider joining Irene and others by getting involved. We hope to meet you soon!

The Coalition has set a goal to increase the number of active volunteers, and there are many ways you can become involved. The amount of time you can contribute is entirely up to you. We want to learn about what might interest you! For more information, check out our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/ashlanddecisions](https://www.facebook.com/ashlanddecisions) or contact Kristin French at kristin.french@ashlanddecisions.org.



May is Mental Health Month!

In 1949, Mental Health Awareness Month was established to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and wellness in Americans' lives. Since 2021, the Town of Ashland has recognized Mental Health Month by increasing awareness about the impact of mental health on our overall health and wellbeing and encouraging the community to take advantage of programs, events, and resources that promote positive mental health.



Talk to your Child & Teen about their Mental Health

- **Check in.** Ask how they are feeling and how things are going in their life. Listen more than you talk to truly hear what your child is saying. Be aware that **your child may not want you to problem-solve**, they may just want to be heard and accepted.
- **Listen to their words when they speak**, and also pay attention to any changes in their everyday behavior.
- Be curious. Encourage your child to keep talking. Validate their feelings by saying things like: "Tell me more." "I hear you." "I understand you feel left out."
- **Encourage your child to learn about and label their emotions**, and to accept all emotions as valid.
- Ask your child to come up with ideas for how to cope when they start to feel scared, mad, sad or otherwise upset. Talk with your child about their concerns. **Let them take the lead**, as they learn coping skills that work for them.

Signs of a Mental Health Problem

- Is feeling very sad or withdrawn for 2+ weeks.
- Has severe mood swings & behavior changes.
- Often has problems in friendships and other relationships.
- Has a sudden overwhelming fear or worry that does not match the situation.
- Seems unusually irritable or displays explosive anger.
- Has consistent trouble sleeping or falling asleep.
- Changes their eating habits or loses weight.
- Spends so much time alone that it gets in the way of doing other activities.
- Is taking new risks, like using drugs or alcohol.
- Has lots of stomachaches or headaches.
- Avoids school or stops doing as well as they used to in school.

Give your Teen tips to notice and help peers

- Teach your teen about mental health warning signs and urge them to tell an adult if they think they know someone who may have a mental health problem.
- Tell them to never keep a secret if someone they know is thinking about suicide or harming others.
- Have your household put **988**- the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in their phones in case of emergency.

Remember:

At least 1 in 5 kids will have a diagnosable mental health problem that needs treatment.
If your child develops a mental health problem, know it is not you or your child's fault. Please get help just as you would for a physical health problem. Don't let blame or shame keep you from getting help for a child. Effective help is available and can make an important difference in helping your child get back on track with healthy development and life.

Reference: Mental health and your child or Teen: What to watch for, how to help. Seattle Children's Hospital. (2023).



SCAN HERE!



Mental Health Awareness Webpage

We have created a webpage dedicated to MHAM.
Check back often for updates

- ~ Community Events
- ~ Educational Programs
- ~ Mental Health Resources
- ~ Ways to participate

<https://www.ashlandmass.com/977/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>

Follow us on social media for the latest DAET news, updates and prevention campaigns!



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER
[@ashlandDAET](https://twitter.com/ashlandDAET)

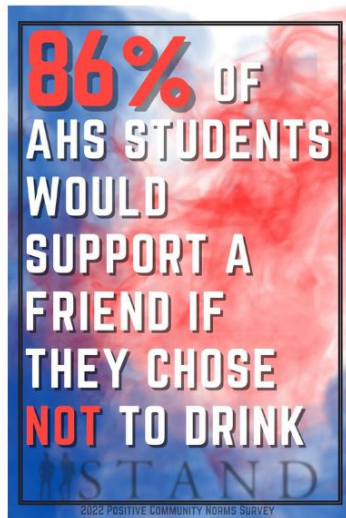
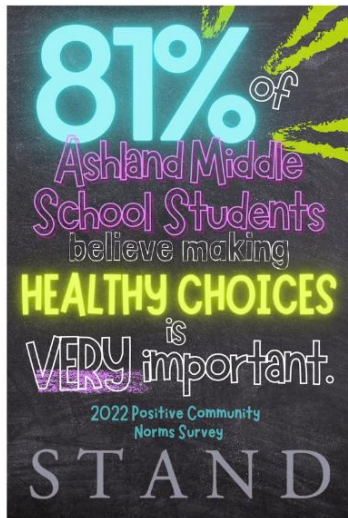
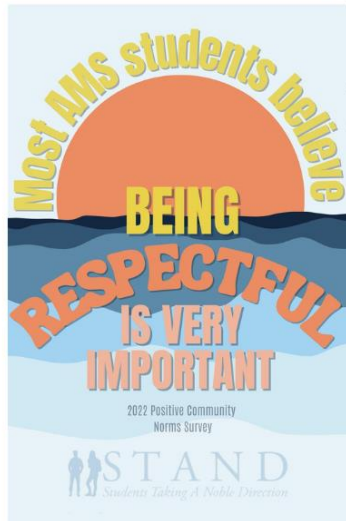
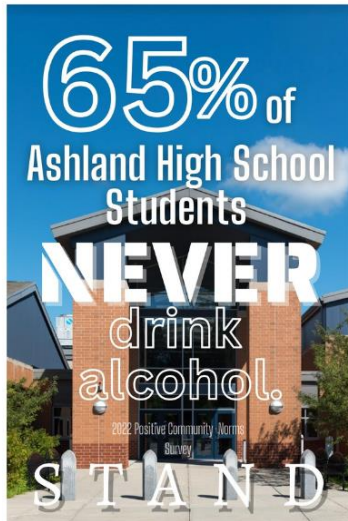


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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



Update on the 2023 STAND Campaign

Students Taking a Noble Direction. (STAND) is a positive social norms campaign at Ashland Middle & High School that uses social norms messaging to raise awareness that MOST Ashland teens are making healthy and safe decisions and that the number of youth who report substance use and risky behaviors is much lower than teens and parents think. This year our focus is on reducing and preventing alcohol use at AHS, and making healthy decisions at AMS.

Messages are developed from the Spring 2022 Positive Community Norms Survey conducted at both AHS & AMS. Students are given the opportunity each month to decide on the message phrasing and image design through Pilot Testing facilitated by administration at each school.

Have an AMS or AHS student interested in poster design? Want to share your creativity with us? Email @Eliza.Dodge@AshlandDecisions.org

Take a look at this year's posters from February & March 2023

DAET Healthy Decisions Video Series

As part of outreach and engagement efforts, DAET introduces the **Healthy Decisions Video Series**. This video series, available on our Youtube and Facebook Pages, introduces and discusses topics ranging from youth substance use to mental health. We hope these videos facilitate reflection and conversations between youth, parents, and youth support networks about the topics discussed.



Interested in watching? Scan the QR Code with your phone camera to visit DAET's Youtube Page.

Want to participate in a Healthy Decisions Video or suggest a video topic?

Email Eliza.Dodge@AshlandDecisions.org

Have your High School Student join us for Office Space @ AHS

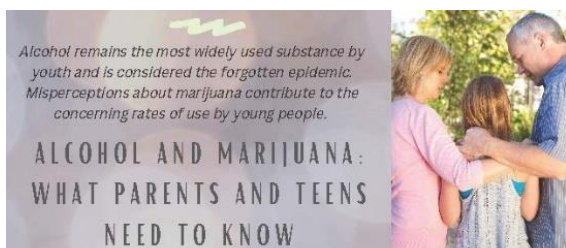
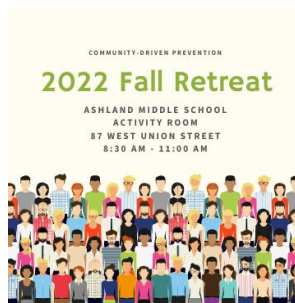
As a new way to support and engage AHS teens, Youth Engagement Coordinator, Eliza, holds weekly office space in the DAET office at AHS. This office is located on the second floor by the computer labs.

Office space offers AHS students a chance to ask questions about substance use & mental health, browse educational resources, grab a focus fidget, or a STAND pencil or pen for their next class.

When teens feel supported in their school environment, they are less likely to make risky decisions outside of school. DAET has created Office Space to support AHS students in navigating important conversations in supportive environments.

We've been busy!

DAET kicked off this year with our Annual Retreat in October to talk about sustainability and develop next year's prevention Action Plan.



<https://youtu.be/Er0dwYV2dg>

Dr. Safdar Medina addresses the persistent problem of youth alcohol use and shares strategies for parent/caregiver support. Watch the video replay.



Author Rachel Brian shared strategies from her book "The Worry (less) Book" to help kids identify & manage stress and to assist parents with supporting their kids.

Watch the video recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hT0kuV9xbw>



Local author Deborah Burke Henderson joined us for a volunteer-led reading of her award winning children's book *Lelia's Aventura*.

Coalition Meetings

Coalition meetings are held in October, January and March typically on the 2nd Tuesday from 5:30-7 PM. All are welcome.

Programs & Events

Community programs & events are added through the year. All are FREE and open to the public.

Meeting and program dates will be posted in August at ashlanddecisions.org/calendar