

Decisions At Every Turn Coalition Community Newsletter

An Ashland community resource to help support young people & their caregivers in creating a safe & healthy Ashland for all.



Winter
2024

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Spring of 2014 changed my life. Ashland had recently been awarded a Drug Free Communities (DFC) Grant, a 5-year grant to enhance community collaboration to help reduce and prevent youth substance use in Ashland. I was hired to provide support to the Decisions at Every Turn (DAET) Program Coordinator to plan and implement our community's first comprehensive prevention action plan. The first three tasks that I was assigned were to oversee our Community Conversations, develop prevention education materials, and launch a newsletter. Through the years, Community Conversations evolved into our Parent & Caregiver Coffee and Conversations which have addressed a variety of mental health and substance use prevention topics. We built a library of *Parenting for Prevention* tip sheets to foster family conversations around important youth issues. All 26 can be found on our website in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. Lastly, this issue marks the 27th installment of our DAET Newsletter which was created to serve as a community resource to help prevent and reduce youth substance use in Ashland.

Those projects were just the beginning. In the past 10 years, DAET's community residents, school representatives, local organizations, businesses, town departments and so many others have prioritized prevention as a pathway to promoting positive youth health outcomes. Since receiving the first DFC grant in 2013 and the second DFC grant in 2018, this mighty community has shown up for prevention in a number of ways. From attending community events, workshops, presentations, and coalition meetings - to advocating for prevention policy - to holding your own conversations with Ashland's youth about the risk of underage substance use.

We have also experienced great uncertainty during our tenure. The COVID pandemic impacted us all and left a mark on our collective health and well-being. This is especially true for our youth. In response, DAET has teamed with community partners to elevate our focus on mental health and the stigma that often accompanies mental health conversations. To fully embrace our focus on mental health and other root causes that contribute to youth health outcomes, DAET is currently working with stakeholders to refine our mission, vision and values to better align with the current needs of our youth.

This all comes at a poignant time in our coalition's history. As our ten years of DFC funding ended this past September, Ashland cemented its commitment to prevention through the expanded Department of Prevention & Human Services. By integrating prevention into the town's community health approach, we remain fully invested in preventing substance use and promoting positive mental health in Ashland kids and teens. DAET will continue to serve as Ashland's primary resource for substance use prevention and positive health promotion, where Youth & Community Coordinator Eliza Dodge Usen will lead youth prevention education and community programming, while working closely with teens at AHS & AMS.

Please take a moment to read about these new and exciting changes for DAET as we work towards sustaining prevention in Ashland. This includes providing opportunities (and the need) for increased adult involvement and how we are encouraging youth participation and social action to meet the growing desire to have a positive impact in their community.

Now, nearly 10 years later in the Winter of 2024, I am equally excited about the work that lies ahead and optimistic that prevention will always have an important place in Ashland.

~Kristin French, MSW, LCSW
Director, Department of Prevention & Human Services

Upcoming Events

January:

MLK Week of Service
January 15-20

February:

Kindness Week
February 12-16

March:

Drug & Alcohol Facts
Week
March 18-24

April:

Stress & Alcohol
Awareness Month

May:

Mental Health
Awareness Month

To get involved in these events, email
edodge@ashlandmass.com



Students from Ashland High School joined DAET at our annual Fall Retreat to share their real life experiences, challenges, and hopes as a young person in Ashland. *Learn more about our retreat on the last page of this newsletter.*

Visit our Website-
AshlandDecisions.org

Like us on Facebook-
Decisions At Every
Turn

Follow us on
Instagram-
[@AshlandDecisions](https://www.instagram.com/AshlandDecisions)

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ASHLAND'S



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2024

DECISIONS AT EVERY TURN
COALITION

MOST
AHS
STUDENTS
NEVER
USE VAPE
PRODUCTS.
**CHOOSE VAPE FREE.
THE BEST WAY TO BE.**

Spring 2022 Positive Community Norms Survey



What you should know about
STAND
Students Taking A Noble Direction
at Ashland Middle & High School.

STAND is a positive social norms campaign seeking to address misperceptions that young people might have about choices their peers are making. The STAND campaign reminds Ashland students that they have the power to make their own positive decisions about behavioral health. Through these choices, Ashland can become a safer & healthier place for young people.

Data for the STAND campaign is collected every 2 years from the Positive Community Norms Survey, conducted at AMS & AHS.

DAET is scheduled to administer the next survey in the Spring of 2024.

MOST Ashland Middle School Students

believe being **RESPECTFUL**

is very important.

How can we show RESPECT at AMS?

- Speaking kindly to myself & others.
- Helping younger students & being a leader for others.
- Trying my best to have a positive attitude.
- Making sure I am listening to both teachers & students!
- Being understanding of other peoples experiences & emotions.

Spring 2022 Positive Community Norms Survey



MOST
AHS
STUDENTS
AGREE
**IF YOU
CHOOSE TO
VAPE**
YOU ALSO RISK
HARMING YOURSELF.

Spring 2022 Positive Community Norms Survey



Middle School Students are asked for this year's STAND campaign how they observe core values displayed in their everyday life. Focusing on core values encourages these young people to make positive choices while supporting others to do the same. Through bi-monthly surveys conducted in student advisory blocks, students are able to share what they think values like responsibility, respect, and healthy choices should look like in our community. This year's first message focuses on respect. See what AMS students had to say when asked how they perceive respectful behavior.

For the STAND campaign at Ashland High School this year, students have chosen to address their perceptions about the use of e-cigarettes and vapor products, popularly known as vaping. Data from the Spring 2022 Positive Community Norms survey display that a large majority AHS students choose not to vape. *Learn more about vaping in this newsletter!*

92% of
AHS
STUDENTS
**DO NOT
VAPE.**
**CHOOSE VAPE FREE.
THE BEST WAY TO BE.**

Spring 2022 Positive Community Norms Survey



82% of
AHS
STUDENTS
**THINK
VAPING**
IS NEVER A GOOD
THING FOR ANYONE
THEIR AGE TO DO.

Spring 2022 Positive Community Norms Survey



Ashland High School Students--
Sign up to be a Student Representative using the QR Code.



AHS Students are encouraged to become a STAND Student Rep! STAND students spread awareness about positive choices & social action in order to create positive community change.

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ASHLAND'S



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TOWN OF ASHLAND WINTER RESOURCE GUIDE

A comprehensive list of services that Ashland residents can access for support year round. Support services include food security, mental health, substance use, parenting support, employment, legal assistance & other needs.

Scan the QR Code with your phone camera & click the weblink to visit organizational webpages.

ASHLAND DEPARTMENT OF PREVENTION & HUMAN SERVICES



ASHLAND FOOD PANTRY



DAET FAMILY & COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE GUIDE



DETAILS OF SERVICES OFFERED BY DPHS



WAYSIDE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER



PARENTS HELPING PARENTS



VAPING RESOURCE GUIDE

E-cigarettes, e-hookahs, pods, pens, tank, mods- they all mean the same thing-- vaping. Vaping has taken off in technology & infamy in recent years. Vaping can put you at risk of irreversible lung damage and disease. Vaping is especially dangerous to teens as it may impact brain and body development.

Scan the QR Codes below & click the web link to learn more about vaping, its risks, and how you can talk to your child about vaping.

Decisions At Every Turn Vaping Tip Sheet



Vaping Products & Visual Dictionary (CDC, 2023)



Vaping: It's All Smoke & Mirrors (American Lung Association, 2023)



Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, & Young Adults (CDC, 2023)



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THE NEW LANDSCAPE OF PREVENTION IN ASHLAND

In November, DAET Stakeholders met for our annual Prevention Retreat. We shared our new prevention updates, explored ways to get Ashland Residents involved, and planned for the future of prevention work in our Community.
Take a look at what the future of prevention will look like in Ashland!

DAET Youth Programming & Education

will be overseen by Ashland's Youth & Community Coordinator, Eliza Dodge Usen.

This roles responsibilities include...

- STAND* social norms campaign
- Collaborations on student & staff prevention education
- Coordination of youth & community prevention efforts

How can **YOU** support the health of Ashland kids and teens?

- ✓ Volunteer with DAET
- ✓ Serve on the Advisory Committee
- ✓ Participate in our Parent/Caregiver Survey

Our Mission, Vision, & Values

Cultural Responsiveness, Substance Use Prevention, Mental Health, Kindness, Respect, Responsibility, Trust, Resiliency, Education, Community connections, Policy Advocacy & Reform, Positive Social Change, Healthy Developmental Relationships

DAET's Advisory Committee

will promote the community voice in identifying youth needs and in supporting our expanded mission to ensure sustainability.

The Youth-led STAND Coalition

will provide a platform where students have ownership of prevention topics addressed in their education and greater community. Through social action initiatives, youth will be given opportunities to take ownership and create positive change in their lives.

What are Ashland's youth saying about prevention?

1. We want to participate and create more spaces where our voices will be heard.
2. We want opportunities to meet with community leaders to talk about topics that matter to us.
3. We want to make a difference & see Ashland become a better place for everyone.

Remember

Adult participation is essential to promote healthy youth decision making.

Parent & Caregiver Prevention Survey

We are looking for parent & caregiver opinions on youth substance use to assist with development of regional prevention efforts. Please share your thoughts in this brief survey.



SCAN QR CODE & CLICK WEB LINK TO VISIT SURVEY.

NOVEMBER 2023 STAKEHOLDER RETREAT



DAET Stakeholders from across Ashland gathered on November 16 for a morning of community reflection, conversation, and strategic imagining for the future of our coalition. As DAET plans for this future, stakeholder participation remains the foundation of our coalition's success.

Attendees enjoyed hearing from our first ever STAND Student Panel. These AHS Students courageously shared their experiences of growing up in Ashland and how our municipal systems can best support them and their developmental trajectory. These young leaders request a call to action for Ashland leaders and adults who can create positive change in our community!