

## Around Manhasset Schools

# CASA: Underage Drinking Prevention Initiative

*Facebook pictures depicting underage drinking may be proof in civil lawsuit*

As part of a nationwide initiative to address underage drinking in local communities, Manhasset CASA hosted a town hall meeting to increase awareness about the negative consequences of underage drinking and discuss steps the community can take to prevent underage drinking. The event, which was supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in collaboration with the federal government's Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking, included Manhasset youth and experts from the health, science and legal fields.

**SAMHSA reports that children and teens are less likely to abuse alcohol if parents are involved in their children's lives, make and enforce clear rules and are positive role models.**

Dr. Stephen Dewey from the Feinstein Institute for Medical Research of North Shore-LIJ Health System presented a realistic and compelling picture of how today's youth engage in excessive and dangerous underage drinking – especially binge drinking. Using pet scan images, Dr. Dewey was able to show parents how underdeveloped the teen brain is until age 25 and how drugs and alcohol can actually change its development. Dr. Dewey informed parents that the message should be a simple one for teens: if they consume alcohol during the period of time when their brain is developing, adolescence, they can arrest brain development and it never catches up. "The consequence of being sick the following morning is one thing. But 10, or 20 or 30 years down the road, it is something far more serious," stated Dewey.

Steven Chassman, clinical director for the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence works with teens across Long Island who are abusing drugs and alcohol. He alerted parents that when teens are under the influence of alcohol they often experiment with other illegal drugs. "Underage drinking is a pressing

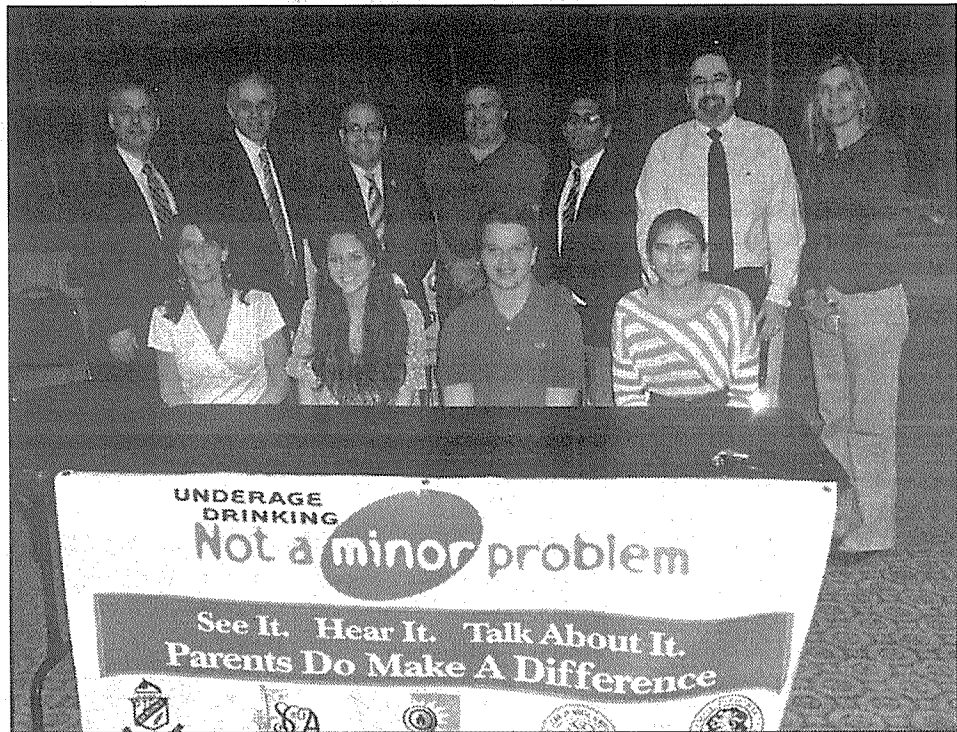
health concern that affects Long Island's youth and our communities," explained Chassman. He pointed out that teens drink alcohol and get high for many reasons and noted that teens who start drinking and drugging at age 15 or younger can develop dependence later in life.

In the Manhasset Public Schools' 2011 Bach Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment Student Survey results, 27 percent of 10th grade students and 54 percent of 12th grade students indicated that they are "binge drinking" or having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row more than one time in the past two weeks. In addition, students readily report sources and places of underage drinking occurring in homes with and without their parent's permission.

Emil L. Samuels, Esq., a civil attorney with Kelner & Kelner, discussed how Nassau County's Social Host Law makes it a crime to serve alcohol to teens in your home. Additionally, Mr. Samuels informed parents that they may also be held civilly liable for serving alcohol to minors when the minor then causes an accident causing injury or damage to person or property. Under New York State's General Obligations Law Section 11-100, any person who is injured because of the intoxication or impairment an underage person shall have the right to sue to recover actual damages against the individual who knowingly caused, furnished or procured alcohol to the underage teenager. Further, Mr. Samuels informed parents that, under new and emerging case law, a teen's Facebook pictures and postings depicting underage drinking parties may be obtainable as proof in such a civil lawsuit. In a recent Supreme Court decision decided in Suffolk County, a judge has ruled that the search for truth in a court of law outweighs an individual's Facebook "privacy" settings.

Youth input included students discussing their thoughts on how parents are their ultimate role model and questioned just how much time daily or weekly families set aside to communicate about certain topics like our life, our passions, our joys, our sorrows that are not school-related? Another student stated, "I want students and parents to know that underage drinking, shouldn't be the norm for teenagers—parents and students should know the facts and use education to make the right choices."

Together, participants explored tangible measures found to be effective in reducing and preventing underage alcohol use in



Manhasset CASA's Town Hall Meeting was part of a nationwide initiative to address underage drinking in local communities. Shown right to left standing: Lisbeth Shibley, executive director and president, Manhasset CASA; Mark Sippin, assistant principal Manhasset High School; Steven Chassman, clinical director, Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence; Dr. Stephen Dewey, Feinstein Institute for Medical Research of North Shore-LIJ Health System; Dean Schlanger, principal, Manhasset Secondary School; Charles Cardillo, superintendent Manhasset Public Schools; Emil Samuels, Esq., Kelner and Kelner. Seated right to left: Nicole Kiprilov, Manhasset High School student; Griffin Hyde, Manhasset High School student; Adiel Rothstein, Manhasset High School student; and Donna Taylor, board member, Manhasset CASA.

other communities. While the town hall meeting discussion was specific to solutions to prevent social hosting in Manhasset, many parents indicated their belief that younger students need to be taught the science aspects of the development of the teen brain as a means to deter underage drinking. It was noted by some parents that it was unfortunate that the kids who engage in underage drinking and the parents who turn a blind eye did not attend. Most parents felt CASA was preaching to the choir and that it's the people who didn't attend who really need to hear the presentation.

In addition to reaching teens with more education, CASA noted the role families and parents can play to reduce underage drinking in the community. "What parents may not realize," stated Cathy Samuels, project director, Manhasset CASA "is that teens say that their parents' disapproval of underage drinking is a key reason they have chosen not to drink." Research also indicates that families exert a great deal of influence on whether a child uses alcohol. SAMHSA

reports that children and teens are less likely to abuse alcohol if parents are involved in their children's lives, make and enforce clear rules and are positive role models.

According to the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, about 10 million 12- to 20-year-olds report alcohol use during the past month. This number represents more than one out of every four young people in this age group. Approximately 6.5 million were binge drinkers, meaning that they consumed five or more drinks on at least one occasion. Underage drinkers are at risk for negative consequences ranging from lowered academic performance to impaired driving crashes to injury and death. Their illegal use of alcohol may cause many forms of severe, even deadly, harm to others. For 2010, the estimated cost of underage drinking nationwide exceeded \$62 billion.

For more information about the national town hall meeting initiative, go to [www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhallmeetings](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhallmeetings) or Manhasset CASA's website at [www.manhassetcasa.org](http://www.manhassetcasa.org).

## Child Abuse Prevention Services Helps Students 'Steer Clear of Bullies'

*Shelter Rock Elementary School benefits from program*

The Shelter Rock Elementary School recently invited Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS), to present its popular elementary school bully prevention program, Steer Clear of Bullies, to its third and fourth graders. CAPS is Long Island's leading organization dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect, and provides violence prevention and child safety programs to Nassau and Suffolk schools at no cost.

"Statistics suggest that between 35,000 and 55,000 children on Long Island spend

each school day in fear of bullies. Those are devastating numbers," said Alane Fagin, executive director of CAPS. "The Shelter Rock Elementary School deserves credit for being proactive and offering Steer Clear of Bullies bully prevention strategies to their students."

Professionally-trained CAPS volunteers facilitated the Steer Clear of Bullies multimedia program in the students' classroom the week of March 26. The two-session workshop was developed for third and

fourth graders to promote empathy, social skills building and assertiveness skills.

Thanks in part to Manhasset Community Fund, Costco Wholesale, *Newsday* Charities, a fund of the McCormick Tribune Foundation, Ronald McDonald House Charities of the NY Tri-State area, as well as concerned community members, CAPS can provide Steer Clear of Bullies to Long Island public and private elementary schools at no cost. To date, over 600,000 Long Island students have participated in CAPS programs.

"The demand for our student programs increases every year, and so we encourage

community members who are concerned about our children's safety to call us if they have an interest in becoming a CAPS volunteer presenter," said Ms. Fagin.

Founded in 1982, the Roslyn-based Child Abuse Prevention Services is Long Island's comprehensive resource center for the prevention of child abuse, bullying, peer harassment and Internet safety. It is a non-profit underwritten by private donations, grants and legislative appropriations. Information about programs, educational materials and volunteer opportunities are available at [www.capsli.org](http://www.capsli.org) or by calling 516-621-0552 or 631-289-3240.