



Spring 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am privileged to write to you as the Executive Director of the Manhasset Coalition Against Substance Abuse. Many generous and caring people before me have created and developed CASA for the past sixteen years. As a parent of teenage boys, I appreciate what CASA offers and am energized to help it continue.

We live in a beautiful community during a challenging time. We are bombarded with news, fake news, threats, and explicit pictures and videos. We are connected digitally, but experts warn we are losing human connection. We see friends online but experience social isolation and distraction through our many devices that cause fatigue, anxiety, and depression. Our children may be similarly affected; they reported increased depressive symptoms in our 2017 Bach Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment Survey.

When it comes to safety we speak up – we would do anything for our children! We should not stop when it comes to underage drinking. These days our teens are exposed to dangers – highly addictive prescription and other drugs and risky online social behavior – that we never knew. Being a parent of a teenager is more challenging and we need to increase our protection of them.

When science has taught us how to be safer – with car seats, seatbelts and sunscreen – we listened. Science has proven that the teenage brain is damaged by alcohol or other drug consumption. Our legislatures have responded with an increased drinking age of 21, which also has saved lives. “But all my friends are doing it” doesn’t work for jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge, and it shouldn’t when it comes to children drinking.

If our teens say there is social pressure to drink, we need to help them. If they are unable to avoid a beer in the basement, will they be able to avoid the next drug that is offered to them? When a teen says YES to alcohol, he or she is more likely to say YES to marijuana, nicotine and more. In May and June, a brave Manhasset graduate will explain to parents and twelfth grade students how addiction happened to him; early high school drinking progressed and he lost control when his college roommate offered him oxycontin. His addiction caused his family

*Prevention  
Through  
Connection*

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Manhasset CASA, Inc. is a 501 (C) (3) corporation.

*Manhasset CASA exists as a resource to reduce the illegal, underage use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs among its youth, before they are in trouble, by connecting parents, school, community and youth as partners in this common goal.*

tremendous suffering and he almost lost his life before choosing recovery. In 2016, 500 people died on Long Island from opioid overdoses (Newsday, 4.9.17). Whether teens or adults, their tragic path to overdose often began with underage drinking. Manhasset is not immune to the tragedy of addiction. Thankfully, Manhasset also knows of recovery.

This January in response to our prevention needs assessment survey, 46.6 percent of tenth grade students reported having at least one drink in the past 30 days and 10.9 percent reported using marijuana. Of 10th graders (15 and 16 years old) who drank in the past 30 days, 28.6 percent reported binge drinking or having 5 or more drinks in a row during the prior two weeks.

Children simply cannot be their best – socially, academically, or athletically – under these conditions. Substance use not only affects the child’s brain, it puts him or her at risk of injury from physical accidents, embarrassing behavior, and addiction. Posting pictures of drinking may affect their future pre and post college as well as our younger children watching them. Drinking early does not lead to moderate drinking - in fact it’s the opposite; 65.8 percent of twelfth graders reported having at least one drink in the past 30 days and 41.6 percent of these students reported binge drinking in the prior 2 weeks.

Teens already are vulnerable because of increasing academic and social pressure. Some have addiction in their families or are pre-disposed risk takers. Some will experience unforeseen turmoil from a sports injury, illness, divorce, or other loss in their family. We need to help our children: TALK about saying NO to underage drinking, PREVENT access to alcohol and drugs, and HELP develop safe social activities for them.

Eighth grade parents: your children just reported the LOWEST amount of underage drinking ever recorded in Manhasset! Please continue to talk to your children and your adult friends to keep this going and prevent that first drink.

No one can do this alone. Please read CASA’s e-newsletters and find additional resources at [www.manhassetcasa.org](http://www.manhassetcasa.org) and New York State’s [www.Talk2Prevent.NY.org](http://www.Talk2Prevent.NY.org). Please support CASA by becoming a member and attending our fundraisers. Please tell other community members and the Board of Education that you support funding prevention education, as CASA’s federal funding ends next year. Finally, please share your ideas for protecting our children.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer DeSena". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jennifer DeSena