



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
*Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol*



**ARTICLE 17 – July 9, 2008 – Positive Opportunities for Summer Fun**  
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Dawn Taylor is the Community Mobilizer for Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*®. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care*® serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*® serving the State College Area School District.

School's out and teens across Centre County are enjoying a welcome break from the fast pace of the school year. Unfortunately, as many parents know, when teens have too much unstructured time on their hands, boredom quickly results. And on the heels of boredom often comes...trouble.

Research shows that summer is a season when teens are likely to engage in risky activities. Compared with other months, June and July have higher rates of first-time use of alcohol and cigarettes. The National Youth Anti-Drug Campaign reports that each day in the summer, over 6,000 youth across the nation try marijuana for the first time, 38% more per day than during the rest of the year.

The lazy days of summer don't have to signal trouble if parents and communities are proactive. All that free time offers great opportunities for teens to pursue interests they may have little time for during the school year. Talk to your children about the types of activities they might enjoy and encourage them to get involved.

Keeping teens busy with positive, prosocial activities leads to healthy lifestyles and helps them avoid settling into a daily routine of sleeping-in and staying up late. More importantly, according to the National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse, teens who are involved in constructive, adult-supervised activities are less likely to use drugs.

Here are some ways to help your teen have a fun, enriching, and safe summer:

**Create a summer calendar.** Include family vacations, your teen's camps, regular activities, Arts Fest and other community events, and family celebrations. Help your teen fill open weeks with things like sports, creative activities, and community service. If you need ideas, contact area YMCAs, Parks and Recreation programs, The Second Mile, the Youth Service Bureau, or other community organizations.

**Add new options each week.** Check the *Centre Daily Times*, Happy Valley.com, and other sources for opportunities, like newly released movies, library activities, or athletic events.

**Establish a daily routine.** Help teens plan their time by listing any chores they are responsible for. Together brainstorm a list of leisure activities for times when they are bored and looking for something to do, such as swimming, reading, cooking, and crafts. Encourage regular physical exercise. Allow for downtime, but set limits on television and video games.

**Monitor your teens.** Check to make sure your teens are where they say they are. Stay in touch with adult supervisors, such as coaches and other parents. The National Youth Anti-Drug Campaign has shown that teens who are not regularly monitored by their parents are four times more likely to use drugs.

**Reserve time for family.** Be sure to schedule family activities, such as going to movies, sharing meals, and embarking on park outings. The National Youth Anti-Drug Campaign reports that teens who spend time with and have close relationships with their parents are much less likely to drink, take drugs, or have sex.

Summer's here but it won't last forever. Make this a memorable one for you and your teens!

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