

ACT HAPPENINGS

Take Home and Share with Your Family!

Summer, 1999

New Anonymous, Toll-Free, Anti-Violence Tip Line: Call 1-877-APD-TIPS (1-877-273-8477)

Abington youth have a new key chain, and it could be a life saver! Either blue and white or maroon and white, the key chain tags bear the new anonymous, toll-free, anti-violence tip number into the Abington Police Department: 1-877-APD-TIPS (1-877-273-8477).

Set up as a safety valve especially for Abington youth to help prevent school violence, this number can be used to report any observed or overheard threats of violence and crime throughout the community. Abington parents and concerned citizens may also phone in tips on this number at any time.

Lieutenant Dennis McCauley points out, "With this number, students can go to a pay phone and call. They don't need any money, and they remain anonymous." He also stresses that "this phone number is not a substitute for 911 emergencies. If people are in a life-threatening situation, one should call 911 immediately."

This is a 24-hour number. The caller will get either a person during staff hours or a voice messaging system at other times. The message system immediately pages a police officer who retrieves the message. Some of the tips that may be called into this line include knowledge of fights, underage drinking, and drug selling or possession. In the wake of the Littleton, Colorado high school tragedy, the Abington Police Department in cooperation with the Abington School District set up this tip line so that police can respond to and prevent potential youth violence.

The Abington Community Taskforce (ACT) is a coalition of parents and Abington-based educational, religious, social service, recreational, civic, and law enforcement agencies. Its mission is to create a responsible, caring, and safe community. ACT welcomes comments, suggestions, and ideas for future events. For more information, contact Kelley Warner at the Abington Police Department: (215) 885-4450 extension 606, or Shelly Erwine, Abington School District: (215) 881-2570. ACT would like to express appreciation to Abington Memorial Hospital for its assistance in printing this publication.

Editor: Rosemary Peters Hinkle

Student Survey Results

What's The Good News?

The results are in from two important student surveys, PRIDE and Communities That Care, administered in Abington schools in the fall of 1998. The good news is that substance use among Abington students has decreased in many areas compared with four years ago, the time of the last survey. Also in most cases, the data are considerably below national averages for 1998.

PRIDE is the national Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education. The nationally normed PRIDE questionnaire surveyed students in grades seven, nine, and eleven. Communities That Care (CTC) is a cooperative effort between the Abington Police Department and School District. The CTC survey is part of a project geared to mobilize the community to initiate prevention programs that protect its youth. This survey was administered to Abington School District students and some students in independent Abington schools in grades six, eight, ten, and twelve.

Both the PRIDE and CTC surveys are self-report assessments, which mean students are asked to indicate individually their experiences with and attitudes toward school safety and substance abuse.

A rewarding finding from the PRIDE survey is that across all grade levels, cigarette use has decreased monthly and annually. Seventh and eleventh grade results were significant, indicating respectively a 62.6% and a 75% decrease since 1994 in substance abuse on a monthly and annual basis. At the same time, the national sample showed a 70 % and an 80% increase in the same comparisons for such substances as cigarettes, beer, wine coolers, liquor, marijuana, cocaine, uppers, downers, inhalants, hallucinogens, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

The ninth grade data--only a 29.2% decrease--indicate a need for more preventative work at the seventh and eighth grade levels. This result mirrored the national data.

When seventh, ninth, and eleventh graders were asked when they use beer, liquor, etc, results clearly indicated that substance use is notably less in school and on weekdays than on the weekends. This finding is significant because it stresses the need for active parent and community involvement in prevention efforts. Other findings indicate that 80-90% of the Abington students surveyed reported that substance abuse is "harmful" or "very harmful" to their health, and fewer students noted participation in violence-related activities when compared to 1994 findings.

In the CTC survey, students are compared with a six-state matched sample. The data indicated that alcohol is the most widely used substance, with 30% of students in all grades surveyed reporting use of alcohol within the past 30 days. However, Abington student use is the same or lower at each grade level when compared to the matched sample.

Tobacco is the next most widely used substance, with 19% of sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders reporting use. The level of delinquent behavior during the past year was the same or less than the matched sample in 75% of the cases.

The CTC survey also measures risk and protective factors. Risk factors are characteristics of the individual, family environment, school, and community that are known to predict drug use, delinquency, and gang involvement. Protective factors are characteristics that help prevent student involvement in negative activities. Again,

the good news is that Abington students have fewer risk factors and more protective factors than their matched sample group. The data also indicate that as age increases, risk factors increase and protective factors decrease. One area of concern is that Abington students reported feelings of academic failure significantly higher than the matched comparison. This is defined as the experience of perceived failure which increases the risk of problem behaviors. Abington School District students reported better protective factors than the matched sample. They scored the same or better on eight of the ten protective factors. In particular, Abington students reported significantly higher percentages on the factor "School Opportunities for Involvement." They scored slightly lower than the comparison group on

"Opportunities and Rewards for Positive Involvement in the Community" and "Religiosity."

Based on the survey findings, the following goals have been set by the school district:

1. Reduce student self-reported rates of drug and alcohol abuse.
2. Provide more opportunities for community members and parents to dialogue.
3. Reduce self-reported concerns regarding safety and violence.
4. Assist students in accessing positive opportunities in the community for jobs, volunteer work, and social activities.
5. Reduce the risk of academic failure and increase the number of successful academic experiences.

McKinley Elementary Turns Blue ... Twice!

Have you seen the sign that says "**McKinley Elementary School Pennsylvania Blue Ribbon School 1998-99**"? Look for a new edition soon. McKinley was just named a National Blue Ribbon School.

McKinley Elementary School was one of only 20 schools named last fall as a Pennsylvania Elementary School of Distinction by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. McKinley was then nominated for a National Blue Ribbon, becoming one of 269 schools out of 470 to be selected by the National Blue Ribbon Committee for a site visit.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools program, created in 1982, recognizes and celebrates schools that demonstrate excellence in teaching, student achievement, leadership, and parental and community involvement. Schools who apply for this program devote a great deal of time and effort to gathering and chronicling the accomplishments of teachers, students, and parents.

Not surprisingly, this honor has increased the pride and unity of spirit at McKinley. Students decorated the hallways with their thoughts on this distinction:

"The students at McKinley are the best part of us that makes us great."

Rachel Koolpe, grade 5

"The teachers are great." **Carla Klemmer**, grade 3

"McKinley School's great because of activities like McKINGO that involve parents and kids."

Len Nicholas, grade 6

"My school is special because kids learn new information." **John Timlin**, grade 3

"McKinley School is great because people work together." **Patrick Laquer**, grade 1

"McKinley has faith in all their students." **Mrs. Osborn's fifth grade class**

Safe Sitter Classes Offered

Eleven through thirteen-year-olds who enjoy child care can become “safe sitters” this summer by taking the Safe Sitter Class at the Holy Redeemer Child Care Center on the campus of Holy Redeemer Hospital and Medical Center. The two-day program will be offered twice: July 17-18 and August 21-22 from 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. This \$20 course covers basic life-saving techniques, safety precautions to prevent accidents, knowing how and when to summon help, and tips on basic child care. Register now at 1-800-818-4747.

Parenting Center Announces Summer Groups and Graduates

Summer will not be a quiet time for the Parenting Center in Abington. Two weekly Play ‘n Share drop-in discussion groups for parents and their children are offered between Memorial and Labor Days. The Tuesday group meets from 1:30 – 2:45 p.m. and is geared to parents with infants who are not yet mobile. Interested parents are asked to call the Center in advance to indicate their attendance at this group. The Friday group meets from 10 – 11:30 a.m. and is for parents with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. No pre-registration is necessary for this group. These non-sectarian gatherings are held at Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Parkview & Lycoming Avenues, Abington. For information and registration, call the Center at 215-576-0586.

This spring, the Parenting Center was pleased to graduate its first class of parenting educators. Graduates, who devoted six months to intensive study and practicum, will begin to apprentice in Center programs this summer and fall. They are: **Robert Almond**, Abington police officer; **Kim Shields**, Abington Memorial Hospital employee; and community members **Kate Benson**, **Mary Ellen Glenn**, **Jill Henken**, **Teri Mahoney**, **Jennifer Moore**, **Magdalena Nunez**, **Lois Peiffer**, **Sherry Pursel**, **Kelly Shannon**, and **Michelle Smith**.

The Parenting Center may add summer workshops to its schedule. Check cable channel 43 or call 215-576-0586 for an update.

Congratulations to Glenside-Weldon’s Carolyn C. Weingard. The White House recently announced that this Abington fourth grade teacher has been selected as Pennsylvania’s sole national winner in the elementary mathematics category of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching Science and Mathematics. A \$7,500 grant from the National Science Foundation accompanies this very prestigious award.

Save These Dates

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| “We Can Say No” Community Event | October 6 | Keswick Theatre |
| “Strengthening the Family through Effective Parenting” Conference | November 13 | Gloria Dei Church |