

Reading your way to good health this summer

What's better than a good book and a hammock? How about a group of people who've read the book gathered for a discussion?

Communities That Care (CTC) of Lorain County, a countywide coalition working to prevent underage substance abuse, is launching countywide book groups to discuss healthy reads. On the list: "How to Raise a Drug-Free Kid, The Straight Dope for Parents: What Kids Don't Reveal, What Parents Need to Know," by Joseph A. Califano, Jr. and "Sunny's Story: How to Save a Young Life," by Ginger Katz. Califano's book is geared for parents, caregivers and community members, while Katz's book is written for 4th-8th graders.

What's in it for you?

- First, education.

Califano's book offers advice and information on preparing children for crucial decision-making moments; when and how to talk to your kids about drugs and alcohol; how to respond if your kid asks, 'Did you do drugs?', knowing when your child is most at risk and preparing youth for college's freedoms and potential pitfalls. Califano is founder and chair of the National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), based out of Columbia University. He has also held several government positions including U.S. Secretary of Health & Human Services (1977-1979) where he launched the nation's antismoking campaign.

Katz's book relates the story of losing a best friend; it's narrated through the



eyes of Sunny, a beagle, as he witnesses his young master's struggles with drugs.

Next, incentives:

- CTC has purchased copies of both books, which will be offered at no cost for book group members. The coalition is also looking into some give-aways (yet to be determined) to make the book groups just a bit more interesting. Book groups can be launched by libraries or by community groups, or even a few folks, interested in hosting in homes, libraries and other community venues.

Finally, fun and friendship:

- Book groups are great places to find like-minded folks interested in sharing great conversation around a topic. It's great to find others to discuss the thorny issues of raising kids.

We're happy to announce that the Lorain Public Library's Main Library Branch at 351 Sixth Street in Lorain, is the first to jump onto the book group bandwagon; the library, in collabora-

tion with CTC, is going to be hosting a September book group around Califano's book. Promotion will start soon and books will be available by mid-August - plenty of hammock time with the book prior to the book group. Book group participants will also receive a copy of "Sunny's Story" along with discussion guidelines, to share with a young person - that dovetails nicely into the library's Fall Family Read-Aloud featuring books focusing on dogs.

The book group concept is also taking off nationwide. On June 9th, former Ohio First Lady Hope Taft announced the Leadership READS Initiative, a state-by-state effort through First Spouses to teach parents techniques to minimize teen alcohol consumption and drug use through selected books. Groups will form to guide parent to parent conversations to improve parenting skills, strengthen their families and protect their children from substance abuse. Both Califano's and Katz's books are on their future reading lists. Taft is the president/CEO of the Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free Foundation.

Over time, CTC is hoping to expand the list of healthy reads and would like to bring in some of the authors for community-wide discussions, a great finale for readers ready to discuss ways to help our youth. Stay tuned for details on that front.

For more information on book groups being launched by Communities that Care of Lorain County, contact Catherine Gabe, cgabe@lorainadas.org or 440-282-9920.