

Effects of drugs and alcohol from two different perspectives

I have been working as the youth coordinator of the Teen Institute of Lorain County for the past two months. Our Youth Advisory Board has been meeting on Sunday nights to discuss positive alternatives to living drug and alcohol free lives.

Recently, prevention specialists, Jose Flores and Joel Reichlin of the Lorain County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services (LCADA), spoke to our youth about the impact of drugs and alcohol in Lorain County and the lingering effects they can have on people and their families. Both Jose and Joel work with more than 1,000 students and over 100 families. Their focus is educating families on addiction and treatment.

Jose sees a general lack of education regarding the effects of drugs and alcohol. In fact, he said that many young people who overdose on drugs or alcohol do so not because they were addicts, but because they had no idea how much a certain drug could affect their body. Joel said that he hates drug abuse and how it negatively impacts families. Joel and Jose both try to find a non-biased ap-



proach to teach kids and their families about the facts surrounding drugs and alcohol. They also approach kids and their families in interesting and engaging ways in order to make a better impact.

The comments from our youth regarding how they see drugs and alcohol impacting their lives were profound. One said drugs and alcohol attract younger and younger children. "Kids are very impressionable. They want to be accepted by the older kids at school so they will do drugs and alcohol to be cool." Another youth said that it's not just the bad kids that do drugs and alcohol. "Many of the good kids at my school do drugs and alcohol, but adults tend to look in the other di-

rection because they are good kids."

This conversation on drugs and alcohol in Lorain County is a perfect introduction to our "Camera Project" we will be working on over the holiday season. Each of our youth members is given a disposable camera to take pictures of what they see in their communities. We are looking to see how alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are promoted in different communities in Lorain County. For example, a billboard advertising the coolness of drinking near a local school is one snapshot we could potentially see.

Jose Flores left our youth group with a lasting message: People use drugs and alcohol to change a feeling that they are not comfortable with. However, that feeling does not go away once one comes down from their high achieved by drugs and alcohol.

If there are any high school youth that are interested in the Camera Project or if you would like more information about the Teen Institute of Lorain County please feel free to contact Jordan Andrews at jtandrews102@yahoo.com.