

March 2007

Dear Parents and Community Members:

The Harvard Teen Wellness Coalition is a broad-based community group which includes representatives from the school community, clergy, police, youth sports, the teen center, mental health professionals, and members of the community-at-large. All members of this group share a strong commitment to helping create the safest possible environment for our children.

We are inviting parents of adolescents in Harvard to participate in The Safe Home Network, an initiative we feel can help parents work together to make a difference in the lives of their children. While Harvard is an extraordinary community and a great place to raise children, we are not immune to issues of youth drug and alcohol use and abuse which plague our nation.

The Safe Homes Network is modeled after a program developed in Omaha, Nebraska and used in many communities across the country. The cornerstone of the program is a simple pledge form which asks parents to commit to three guiding principles regarding their responsibilities in supervising their teens. They are:

1. I/we will actively supervise all gatherings or parties of youth in our home or on our property or ask another responsible adult for help to do so.
2. I/we will not allow the possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, other drugs, or violence by youth in our home or on our property.
3. I/we will set expectations for my/our children by knowing where they are going, who they are with, what their plans are, and when they are to return home.

While these guiding principles are valuable for individual families, their power is multiplied within a community when participants make their names public within the network. For example, parents who allow their names to be published in the Safe Homes Directory are welcoming calls from fellow parents who they might not know personally. These calls are extremely valuable in confirming that the party your child says they will be attending is being chaperoned. Again, the goal of this program is to help protect our children and preserve their future. We are opening this program up to all families with students at The Bromfield School.

Programs such as this are not a panacea. They do, however, help empower parents to better protect their children. An old African proverb reminds us that, "it takes a village to raise a child". Safe Homes are one way our village can work together to that end.

Those of you wishing to learn more about this program are invited to visit the Harvard Safe Homes Network link which can be reached through the Parents & Community link at www.psharvard.org.

Sincerely,

The Harvard Teen Wellness Coalition

Edward Denmark, Chief of Police

Steven Frost, Community Representative, Harvard Athletic Association

Gretchen Henry, Harvard School System/Community Education Director

Scott Hoffman, Associate Principal, The Bromfield School

Cynthia Hurley, Guidance Counselor, The Bromfield School

Thomas Jefferson, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Ellen Leicher, Community Representative

Jay Ryan, Ph.D., Community Representative

Rev. Gregory Schmidt, Pastor, Harvard Congregational Church

Jeff Shaw, Harvard School Committee

Terry Symula, Community Representative

Patty Wenger, Parent Representative Bromfield School Council

