

**Dear Redwood Parents/Guardians,**

**Holiday Gratitude and Living the Life In Marin.** Between Thanksgiving and the holiday season approaching, I've been thinking a lot how fortunate we are to live in Marin County. Like everyone, I am looking forward to spending time with family and friends over winter break and enjoying the holiday festivities in this beautiful county.

As you probably know, our community's binge drinking, alcohol and other drug use rates are among the highest in the state and the country – for both teens and adults. The holiday season is a good time to remember the importance of modeling healthy behavior with respect to our own alcohol and drug use. Our teens are watching, often more than we realize.

Having been a Tam District high school teacher, assistant principal, and now principal for almost 25 years, I am familiar with teen alcohol and drug use in Marin. We are very fortunate to have organizations in our community that are working hard to keep students healthy and safe, including our PTSA and the Twin Cities Coalition for Healthy Youth. These volunteers are working together to raise awareness on the topic of alcohol and other drug use through parent education events and other programs.

***Be the Influence.*** One of these programs is the Redwood PTSA's "*Be the Influence*" Pledge and Online Directory. Described at <http://www.tamdistrict.org/Page/4028>, *Be the Influence* is premised on the fact that parents are still the biggest influence in their teens' lives - both positively and negatively. And although it is appropriate to give teens some degree of freedom and independence, they still need our supervision and engagement. Redwood's *Be the Influence* program gives parents the tools to continue to monitor their teens and be a positive influence in their lives. If you haven't joined this program, I encourage you to do so before the holidays, especially if you are going to be in town over New Year's Eve.

**Parties:** Last year, I circulated an excellent letter written by the Deans of Students at Marin Catholic regarding parties, emphasizing the parental responsibilities that essentially

are outlined in our Be the Influence Pledge. It is important to remember that towns and municipalities in Marin have **Social Host Ordinances**. These laws impose liability as described at the Twin Cities Coalition website at <http://thecoalitionconnection.com/law-enforcement/social-host/>. Many towns strictly enforce these ordinances, regardless of whether the parent is at home or in town or not. If you are going to be out of town, it is advisable to contact your local police departments for a "vacation check" to safeguard against underage drinking and drug use on your property while you are away. As an example, the Central Marin Police Authority's protocols are described at <http://thecoalitionconnection.com/law-enforcement/reporting/>.

**Parenting Tips.** For additional parenting tips on **Preventing Childhood Alcohol Use** (which also applies to other drugs) by NIH's National Institute on Alcohol Abuse go to <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/adolescentflyer/adolflyer.htm> and from the Twin Cities Coalition for Healthy Youth, visit their website and Top 10 Tips for Parents at <http://thecoalitionconnection.com/parenting-tips/>.

**Upcoming Parent Education Events:** Please "save the date" for the following highly informative Parent Education programs relating to these and other topics:

February 4 <sup>th</sup> at 7 pm	Author Laura Kastner discussing "The Launching Years"
March 3 <sup>rd</sup> at 8:30 am	Law Enforcement and other panelists on Teens & the Law
March 9 <sup>th</sup> at 7 pm	Jonathan Scott, "Miles to Go" Alcohol/Drug Prevention Specialist and Author of "Where's the Party?" and "Not all Kids Do Drugs"

**Redwood HS Bark Article.** In the meantime, we can learn so much from our own students who navigate these issues. Below is an insightful opinion piece in our Bark newspaper, on parental drinking, from the little league bleachers and around the kiddie pools to gatherings at home. If you haven't read it already, please do so at <http://redwoodbark.org/2014/10/parental-drinking-inadvertently-influences-teenagers/>.

The article ends with this poignant reminder: Marin youth "should be able to look to their parents for guidance - and parents should know that when they're under the influence, their children can be influenced too."

Together with Assistant Principals Katy Foster, Larry Pratt and LaSandra White, we wish you and your families the happiest, healthiest and safest of holidays in December and throughout the New Year.

David Sondheim

Principal, Redwood High School