



Back to School  
PAGE 16

# West Valley View



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12 OPINION

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## The importance of alcohol prevention discussions



BY ERIKA ARTHUR  
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According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, around 50% of teenagers have tried illicit drugs at least once in their lifetime. With drugs and binge drinking on the rise, it's essential to recognize the importance of alcohol and substance abuse education in schools and to ask parents to support the effort by encouraging open conversations with their children about underage drinking at home.

Education provided in a school setting is instrumental in teaching children and teens about the potential implications of their actions and habitual behaviors. Alcohol education in schools offers a different perspective on substance abuse and a different atmosphere where young

people may feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences with alcohol.

As much as every parent wants their child to feel like they can be completely transparent, it doesn't always happen, and having a school-based curriculum and services can be an excellent resource for families.

Many Valley schools offer alcohol education and behavioral health services, so I encourage parents to investigate what alcohol education resources are available at their child's school. These resources may include after-school programs, school counselor meetings, peer discussion groups, and more. Sessions provide young people with valuable information, insightful stories, examples and case studies, and advice about seeking help or assisting others.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse suggests that every \$1 spent on prevention contributes 10-fold

savings on drug and alcohol treatment. Therefore, talk to your child before exposure to alcohol and other drugs. When parents talk with their children early and often, they are more likely to respect your rules and advice.

It's never too early to talk to your children about alcohol, especially because many children may try alcohol or other drugs at a very young age. About 10% of 12-year-olds say they have tried alcohol and, by age 15, that number jumps to 50%. Although those statistics sound scary, believe it or not, you significantly influence your child's decisions to experiment with alcohol.

One of the most influential factors during a child's adolescence is maintaining a strong, open relationship with a parent. When parents create supportive and nurturing environments, children make better decisions. Though it may not always seem like it, children listen to their parents' concerns, so parents must discuss the risks of using alcohol.

Alcohol misuse by school-aged

children arises from risk factors associated with genetics, culture, environment, and the behavioral patterns of consumption by parents or other family members. These may also occur due to interpersonal, sensation-seeking, or impulsive issues and/or concerns, not to mention curiosity and peer pressure. Alcohol prevention discussions at home and school are imperative to prevent or delay the onset of alcohol use.

By utilizing the school as a resource and supporting it with discussions about alcohol at home, parents create an atmosphere where young people are more likely to be transparent and share their honest feelings about alcohol and how it impacts their lives.

*Buckeye resident Erika Arthur, MSW, BHT, is a school-based therapist for Southwest Behavioral & Health Services School and Community-based Counseling Services West program. For more information about comprehensive behavioral health services for youth and their families in school and community settings, visit [sbhservices.org/school-based](http://sbhservices.org/school-based).*



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**Crisis**...continued from page 11

with substance abuse. Substance use disorders are complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive approach that encompasses prevention, treatment, and ongoing support. If you or someone you know is battling addiction, it is essential to reach out to local healthcare providers, support groups, or helplines to access the assistance and resources necessary for recovery.

In conclusion, the surge in fentanyl overdoses within our community

demands immediate action and collaboration. By spreading awareness, engaging in dialogue, and supporting community initiatives, we can make a tangible difference in addressing this crisis. Let us prioritize the well-being of our community, foster empathy and understanding, and work together towards a future free from the devastating impact of fentanyl overdoses.

For additional information, support resources, or Narcan, visit [wayoutwestcoalition.org](http://wayoutwestcoalition.org) email us at [info@wowcoalition.org](mailto:info@wowcoalition.org)

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