



**CENTRAL NAUGATUCK VALLEY
REGIONAL ACTION COUNCIL**

***New Prevention Coordinator
Hired at the CNVRAC!***

Spring/Summer 2009

Issue 3

Hello everyone! My name is Jesse Mancinone and I am the new Prevention Coordinator for the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council. I took over Bonnie Basile's position on October 22nd, 2008. I want to thank Bonnie for all of the support she gave me in transitioning into this new and exciting job position. The Executive Director, Jennifer Dewitt, and I have been working hard over the past several months, participating in numerous prevention activities across our twelve town sub-region. I thought it would be a good idea to introduce myself and let everyone know who I am. This is my first year working in the field of prevention. For the past three years I have been working in substance abuse treatment in the wonderful state of Vermont. I have experience working for inpatient, outpatient as well residential substance abuse treatment programs. I earned a bachelors degree in Physical Education K-12 from the University of Vermont in 2006. I am currently in my second year of a Masters Degree program in Community mental Health and Substance Abuse Counseling at Southern New Hampshire University. Currently I am serving the CNVRAC as the prevention coordinator as well as an intern. One of the objectives developed for this internship was for me to update and publish this informative newsletter. It has been an honor and a privilege working with Jennifer and all of the various community stakeholders that constitute our sub region. I have learned so much since I began working for the RAC that it is hard for me to convey, in words all of the great experiences I have had along the way. I would like to briefly share about the two main projects I have been working on since October of last year. The First major project that was assigned to me involved problem gambling. I have gained such a better understanding about problem gambling in the state of Connecticut. I was shocked when I learned that Connecticut is home to the largest casino in the world (Fox Woods). I have been promoting various problem gambling prevention activities for a local university since November of 2008. This is the final year of a three year initiative titled "Operation College Sweep". My predecessor Bonnie Basile had been working on this project for the two years prior to my employment with the RAC. "Operation College Sweep" is being funded by the State of Connecticut's Problem Gambling Services (PGS), a program under the umbrella of Connecticut's Department of Mental health and Addiction Services. Susan McLaughlin, Prevention Director for PGS, has been working tirelessly raising awareness about problem gambling and gambling addiction in the state of Connecticut for several years now. She has provided me with excellent guidance and feedback throughout the execution of this contract. I have also been facilitating the evaluation of an Addiction Prevention/Coping Skill Promotion curriculum to a group of 7th and 8th grade boys at Thomaston High School. The curriculum is titled "Taking Charge: A Path to Healthy Choices". As part of our evaluation of this curriculum we are gathering pre and post test data, as well as following up with students 90 days post group completion, and we are also conducting exit interviews to learn about what is and is not working and how it can be modified to more effectively assist young people in future group sessions.

Inside this issue:

Prevention Coordinator article conclusion	2
40 Developmental Assets	2
L.P.C. Member re-	3
Parent's Corner	3
Teen Corner	4
Facts about Marijuana.	5
Important Dates	5
Natl. Awareness Campaigns	6
Our Mission & Service Area.	6

Special points of interest:

Would you like to join the CNVRAC Steering Committee ?

**We meet every third Friday from 9-10:30 AM. Please call our office for more information!
203-578-4044**

Prevention Coordinator

The first few sessions of this curriculum provide youth with basic information about addiction and harmful behaviors such as violence and problem gambling. Topics of later sessions include problem solving, decision making, trust, anger management and goal planning. I have been performing these duties under the supervision of Rose McLaughlin, the social worker for Thomaston High School. Rose also serves on the CNVRAC's steering committee. Her service and dedication to the RAC are greatly appreciated. Working with the youth from Thomaston Middle School has been a phenomenal experience. They are a fantastic group of kids and it has been great getting to know them and having them participate in prevention. I look forward to the months ahead working for the CNVRAC and the twelve towns that we serve. If anyone has any questions or concerns regarding prevention I can be reached Monday through Friday from 10:00-5:00pm at the RAC office.

Jesse Mancinone, Prevention Coordinator

Did you Know?

- Connecticut is home to Fox Woods; the largest casino in the world .
CCPG, 2008
- Research Shows that problem gambling rates double within a 50 mile radius of a gambling facility.
CCPG, 2008
- Americans spend more money on gambling(\$600 Billion), then they do on food (\$400 Billion).
Ap. 304

The Power of Assets

The Search Institute has identified 40 positive experiences and qualities that adults have the power to bring into children's lives. These experiences and qualities are known as Developmental Assets. Adults have such a strong influence on children's lives. The President of the Search Institute, Peter Benson, understands the significance of this influence. He refers to it as the "power of one"; that is the power of one adult to make a positive difference in the life of a young person. The 40 Developmental Assets are spread out over eight life domains that represent essential areas of human development. The first four life domains include: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations and constructive use of time. The assets contained within these domains are considered to be external assets because they focus on external structures such as relationships and activities that foster a healthy living environment for youth. Examples of external assets would be family support, safety, positive peer influence and creative activities. The other four life domains: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies and positive identity, are considered internal assets because they reflect internal values, skills, and beliefs that are necessary for youth to effectively function in society. Examples of these types of assets are achievement motivation, integrity, planning and decision making and self-esteem. The theory behind the Developmental Asset Framework is that the more assets a young person has the more likely they will be to exhibit positive behaviors and attitudes and the less likely they will be to make bad decisions and engage in risky behaviors (e.g. violence, substance abuse, sex). In sum-

	0-10 Assets	11-20 Assets	21-30 Assets	31-40 Assets
Problem Alcohol Use	45%	26%	11%	3%
Violence	62%	38%	18%	6%
Illicit Drug Use	38%	18%	6%	1%
Sexual Activity	34%	23%	11%	3%

many developmental assets increase protective factors and decrease risk factors for youth. Assets have tremendous power to protect youth from many different harmful or unhealthy choices. To illustrate this power, the above chart shows that youth with the most assets are least likely to engage in risky behaviors. These results are based on surveys of almost 150,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth in 202 communities across the United States in calendar year 2003.

A Local Prevention Council Chairperson Reflects

As the Director of the Youth & Social Services Department for the Town of Cheshire, I work in a community where the level of awareness regarding substance abuse issues is consistently a focus of our prevention efforts. I have been on the Board of Directors of the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council for almost ten years and have continued to rely on the support of this agency to help me coordinate, develop, and implement substance abuse

prevention efforts in our schools and in our community.

The competence and experience of the CNVRAC staff has always impressed me. We have had presentations provided by the RAC staff on underage drinking, elderly and prescription drugs, and many others. In addition, the staff of the RAC has provided us with support by attending programs coordinated by my office. The RAC provides us with a connection to prevention resources throughout the

state by informing us of available grant funds, trainings and conferences, as well as presentations in other communities. The RAC has been an essential part of the prevention efforts in the community of Cheshire and the partnership with this agency is one that will continue to flourish as we work to reduce substance abuse in the State of Connecticut.

Michelle Piccerillo, Director
Cheshire Youth & Social Services

Parent's Corner: When You're *Not* The Biological Parent

Parenting is no easy task, no matter who your children are, how you yourself were parented, or what challenges society, schools, and peer groups throw your way here in 2009. It is also not different, even when you are told over and over again by good intentioned people, "Well, you're not *really* their parent, so it must be different for you, right?" Or my other favorite line "It's different when they are *your own* kids." No, it's not.

For my personal situation, I am the older, adult sibling of two teenage youth. I am the Legal Guardian of my sister, and the Guardian of my brother. He is over 18 and no longer requires "legal" oversight. However, just because he is over the age of 18, that does not in any way allow one to assume that he no longer needs guidance, direction, and care.

Within the past two years, both of their parents passed away, leaving them just 6 weeks before their birthdays at ages 15 and 17, without their mother. Sixteen months later, their father was diagnosed with cancer, and after a quick and painful demise, their dad was gone as well.

In steps, me. Having left home at a very young age, and being a professional, responsible, competent woman

today, I have only to thank the countless adults that I had in my life at a very critical time, who helped guide me, teach me right from wrong, and develop my internal moral compass, for my being here to write this article today.

I try to approach parenting my siblings with this same concept in mind. That although I am not their biological parent, I am still a very important adult in their lives, at a very critical time in their development and maturation process. I try to remember what sponges young people are, and how they "soak up" every thing we do, and say, and react to, as adults.

I play by the mantra that I am not their friend, I am the responsible adult in their life. This does *not* preclude us from having a good relationship. It merely sets a healthy boundary between myself and them, when it comes time to create rules, enforce consequences, or dole out praise and correction.

My siblings happily report that I am "fair" with them. I've asked them on occasion for a "report card" of my parenting, and although they would like me *not* to remind them 75 times about being safe when they are out, being responsible with their possessions, or

being diligent in their homework, studying, and chores (in other words, I'm a nag), they say that I am strict, clear in what I expect of them, and that I don't yell at them unnecessarily. In fact, although I believe that I occasionally "blow a gasket" or raise the volume more than necessary, they actually don't think that I've ever *really* yelled at them, or been too harsh.

...makes me wonder, am I doing this parenting thing right? I have to believe that I have been blessed with two amazing teenagers. Given the many intense and painful life experiences they have had so far in their short lives, I think they are exceptional kids.

I think that every child—no matter who they are, their age, their background, their current situation—deserves love, patience, and respect. They also deserve parenting from multiple adults, not just their biological parents. Young people need opportunities to grow & thrive, have healthy boundaries, and unconditional support. I try to give that to my siblings, every day. Even though I am *not* "really" their parent.

Teen Corner: Beacon Falls Teen Goes Above and Beyond

For as long as I can remember I have been a unique child. I was raised to be a motivated student since an early age which has lead me to spend my senior year of high school doing something that no other Woodland Regiona High School student has ever accomplished. During my junior year I went to my guidance counselor, Janine Murdy, and told her that I wanted something more from my classes. The next question she asked me was, "What do you want to do with your life in the future?" At the time I was confused about what I wanted to major in college. I was debating between pursuing a Business and Engineering degree. Janine went on to inform me that Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) has a partnership with local high schools. This new information inspired me to sign up for a night class at NVCC. The class I signed up for was Introduction to Engineering. I was the youngest in the class (16) and I ended up passing with an A+. Despite the obvious success that I experienced I ended up deciding that engineering was not for me. Therefore I am currently giving Business Management a try to see if it is a better fit.

Upon completing the class at NVCC, I went back to my guidance counselor to inform her about my recent success and expressed my interest in attending more college level classes. She suggested that I spend my senior year of high school attending the ACCESS Program at Johnson & Wales University, located in Providence Rhode Island. The situation that I have put myself in is one that not many other high school seniors can relate to. There are approximately 100 students in the ACCESS program with me. This program offers advanced high school students with minimal educational requirements remaining, the opportunity to combine their senior year of high school with their freshman year of college. I will be graduating from Woodland regional High School in June of this year (2009) along with the rest of my class. However at the same time I will be completing my freshman year of college.

This transition has been extra difficult for me for many different reasons; the first being that I am only 17 years old. I never knew there could be such a difference between being 17 and 18. The fact that I am only 17 presented financial barriers. Because I have not technically graduated from high school I am not eligible for financial aid at Johnson and Wales. Being 17 and living in another state also prohibited me from seeking employment, or earning any type of income.

"I have been successful in my classes here. I currently have a 3.64 GPA that I am incredibly satisfied with."

Luckily I have been able to adjust to living in a dorm room with two other girls on campus, in downtown Providence, even though the room is about the size of a walk in closet. Growing up in Beacon Falls never seemed to be that big of a deal for me, but getting tossed into a major metropolitan area, like Providence, caused me to experience some culture shock. The biggest adjustment I have had to make involved the class schedule I was presented with. I am happy to report that I ended up loving my schedule. I get to have Fridays off and the idea of making my schedule my way was a completely new experience for me. I have been successful in my classes here. I currently have a 3.64 GPA that I am incredibly satisfied with. One thing to brag about here in Rhode Island is their phenomenal public transportation, you can go anywhere in the state for free with a college id!

As far as my future is concerned, I am going to experience another major transition in my life in just a few months . The transition I have gone through in the past year has not been enough for me. I came to Johnson & Wales University strictly to participate in their ACCESS program, and to decide on a course of study to major in for the remainder of my collegiate career. In the fall I am going to be transferring to Central Connecticut University as a sophomore and a half, according to the amount of educational credits I have earned.

Even though I am getting my diploma from high school in only a few months from now, in June, I think that I have figured out what I want to do in the future; I have an interest in majoring in Business Management and possibly obtaining a minor in a Communications program of some kind. However I am aware that many college students change their majors multiple times.

I was honored to be able to share my story with Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council (CNVRAC). The way that I got involved with the CNVRAC was very unique. During my junior year at Woodland Regional it was recommended to me that I join the Region 16 Prevention Task Force. This task force is the Local Prevention Council that is located within the 12 town sub-region of the CNVRAC. I managed to attend all of the meetings held by the task force that year. Along with the graduating class of 2009 I had to come up with a senior project. The fact that I was working from 200 miles away made this a little more difficult for me than for the other students at my school. Once it came time to choose a senior project I reflected on the experience I gained from attending the Region 16 Prevention Task Force meetings throughout the previous year. I recalled that members of the task force committee suggested that I try to create a public resource of some kind that could be accessed by members of the community. I am proud to say that I ended up creating my own newsletter along with a website located on Region 16's Edline account (www.edline.net). If anyone would like to speak with me about the ACCESS Program or the college transition please feel free to e-mail me at misschris411@sbcglobal.net.



Some Facts You Just Can't Argue With:

- ◆ Smoking marijuana leads to some changes in the brain similar to those caused by cocaine, heroin and alcohol.
- ◆ There is 50-70% more cancer causing material in marijuana smoke than in cigarette smoke. Although it's constantly promoted as "all natural," marijuana smoke contains more than 400 chemicals.
- ◆ THC (or tetrahydrocannabinol), the primary intoxicant in marijuana and hashish, is rapidly absorbed by fatty tissues in various organs. Generally, traces (metabolites) of THC can be detected by standard urine testing methods several days after a smoking session. However, in chronic heavy users, traces can sometimes be detected for weeks after they have stopped using marijuana.
- ◆ Long-term marijuana use can lead to addiction.



SOURCE: Unless otherwise specified: "Marijuana Myths & Facts: The Truth Behind Popular Misperceptions." ONDCP and NIDA

World Health Day, April, 13th

World Health Day 2009 focuses on the resilience and safety of health facilities and the health workers who treat those affected by emergencies. Events around the world will highlight successes, advocate for safe facility design and construction, and build momentum for widespread emergency preparedness.

Visit : <http://www.who.int/world-health-day> for more information



Keep Kids Alive Drive 25 Day, May 1st

A non-profit organization founded in the summer of 1998, *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25®* is a safety campaign targeting observance of the residential speed limit. In most towns and cities throughout the U.S. the residential speed limit is 25 mph. Thus the slogan, "*Keep Kids Alive Drive 25®*". For more information please visit:

<http://www.KeepKidsAliveDrive25.org/facts/>

Did you know?

- ◆ Speeding in residential neighborhoods represents the single greatest complaint issue to police departments and city council representatives throughout the U.S. (KKAD25)
- ◆ Most speeders on your street live in right in the neighborhood. (KKAD25)
- ◆ Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children of every age from 2-14 years of age (NHTSA-based on 2001 figures from the National Center for Health Statistics)

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Don't Forget About Mom and Dad

Mother's Day is on May 10th

Father's Day is on June 21st



**Central Naugatuck
Valley Regional Action
Council**

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The Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council's mission is to prevent and reduce alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use in its service area among youth, and over time among adults, through community education, community mobilization, public awareness, and advocacy.

We are on the web!
www.cnvrac.org

- April-Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- April-National Child Abuse Awareness Month
- April-National Alcohol Awareness Month
- May-National Youth Traffic Safety Month
- June-Internet Safety Month

Upcoming Awareness Campaigns



The CNVRAC serves the following communities:

- Beacon Falls
- Bethlehem
- Cheshire
- Middlebury
- Naugatuck
- Prospect
- Southbury
- Thomaston
- Waterbury
- Watertown
- Wolcott
- Woodbury



What can the CNVRAC do for you?

- *Provide solutions to reduce addictions
- *Community Mobilization
- *Awareness, Education & Prevention
- *Legislative Advocacy
- *Public Policy Development
- *Technical Assistance & Training
- *Needs Assessment & Data Collection
- *Research & Evaluation
- *Program Development
- *Project Collaboration

Regional Action Councils are led by local educators, parents, business people, social service providers, law enforcement officials, clergy, government leaders and youth. They are designed to be responsive, focused and tailored to meet your community's specific needs.

We are a program of Family Intervention Center.

We are Funded by the State of Connecticut , Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Also funded through municipality support
from the following communities:

Bethlehem, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Prospect,
Waterbury, Woodbury

