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Our vision is to prevent and reduce youth substance use & abuse in the Pequannock Twp. Community through collaboration, education and community-wide change.

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Shattering the Myth

Youth drinking is WORSE in Europe than in the USA, a recent study discovers. European teenagers drink more alcohol more often than their American counterparts, & get drunk more frequently, according to researchers from the PIRE Prevention Research Center. Philanthropy News Network reported data on youths ages 15-16 from 35 European countries showed that every nation in Europe, except Turkey, had higher teen binge-drinking rates than the U.S.

"The claim that Europeans learn to drink moderately and safely in a family setting has been used by many in the United States to argue for lowering the drinking age," said report author Joel Grube. *"But our research shows that premise is a myth. Easy access to alcohol seems to allow young people to drink heavily & in a risky fashion, whether in Europe or the United States."*

The PIRE report concluded teen binge-drinking rates as: USA=22%, Denmark=60%, Germany=57%, Great Britain=54%, Italy=34%, France=28%

The study data came from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol & Other Drugs & the U.S. Monitoring the Future survey. The report, "Youth drinking rates and problems: A comparison of European countries and the United States," is available online.

Did You Know?

In 2009, about **10.4 million young people** between ages 12 and 20 drank **more than "just a few sips" of alcohol.**

By age 15, half of teens have had at least one drink. By age 18, more than 70% of teens have had at least one drink.

Young people drink less often than adults, but when they do drink, they drink **MORE** than adults.

On average, young people have about 5 drinks on a single occasion, which is considered binge drinking.

Youth Drinking Rates and Problems: A Comparison of European Countries & the USA

Among Americans there is a commonly held perception young people in European countries are introduced to alcohol in a cultural context that reduces heavy and harmful drinking. The idea is often expressed that because the drinking age in the United States is 21, much higher than in European countries, young people miss out on the opportunity to learn to drink within family settings where moderate drinking is the norm. They believe, therefore, that American young people drink more frequently, binge drink more, and experience more alcohol-related problems than do European youth. This perception, in turn, is used as argument for changes in U.S. alcohol policies and prevention initiatives, including lowering the minimum drinking age and development of programs that teach responsible drinking to young people.

Do European youth actually drink less and experience fewer problems than their American counterparts?

Research demonstrates that this is not the case. In fact, in comparison with young people in the United States:

- A greater percentage of young people from nearly all European countries report drinking in the past 30 days;
- A majority of the European countries have higher intoxication rates among young people than do youth from the United States;
- For a majority of these European countries, a greater percentage of young people report having been intoxicated before the age of 13.

Based on this analysis, the comparison of drinking rates and alcohol-related problems among young people in the United States and in European countries does not support the premise that young people in Europe drink more responsibly than young people in the U.S.

Lock Up The Liquor; Parents Giving Children Alcohol

Parents are giving their children alcoholic beverages at a much higher rate than most people realize. Some 709,000 youngsters aged 12 to 14 in the United States are drinking beer, liquor and other alcoholic beverages, a new federal study found. Drinking as a youth is a gateway to potentially lifelong alcoholism.

U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Administrator Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. said:

"People who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are six times more likely than those who start at age 21 and older to develop alcohol problems. Parents and other adults need to be aware that providing alcohol to children can expose them to an increased risk for alcohol abuse and set them on a path with increased potential for addiction."

In the past month alone, more than 200,000 kids were given alcohol by a parent or other adult fam-

ily member, according to a report from SAMHSA. Peter Delany, Director of SAMHSA's Center for Behavioral Health Statistics & Quality continues:

"About 5.9% of 12- to 14-year-olds have used alcohol in the past month. That's a pretty large number. And almost all of these kids got that alcohol for free. Anecdotally, parents say, 'Well, at least they are drinking at home and not on the street, or at least they are not smoking marijuana' -- all kind of silly things. If you want to have a big impact on preventing problems with youth alcohol use, it starts at home. This is a wholly preventable behavior."

In fact, about 45% got alcohol from a parent or other family member or they took it from their home without permission, Delany added. About 15% of these kids just took the liquor, but 15.7% got it directly from that parent or guardian and another 14% got it from another relative.

Dr. Gwen Wurm, an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics at the University of Miami Miller

School of Medicine adds:

"This is something we have known: kids do get their alcohol at home. As parents we need to guide our children into the kind of appropriate choices they can be making."

In 2003, the average age of first use of alcohol was about 14, compared to about 17.5 in 1965. People who reported starting to drink before the age of 15 were four times more likely to also report meeting the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.

As children move from adolescence to young adulthood, they encounter dramatic physical, emotional, and lifestyle changes. Developmental transitions, such as puberty and increasing independence, have been associated with alcohol use. So in a sense, just being an adolescent may be a key risk factor not only for starting to drink but also for drinking dangerously.

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