

## Summary of January 24, 2012 B-CC H.S. PTSA meeting on “Alcohol and Drug Use Among Teens”

At the January 24 PTSA Program, over fifty parents came together to learn from experts on addiction and criminal enforcement, community leaders, and school administrators about alcohol and drug use among teens. Parents watched a powerful video clip about a college student who drank too much and died of alcohol poisoning after his friends left him on a couch “to sleep it off.” Beth Kane Davidson, Director of Suburban Hospital’s Addiction Treatment Center, and Mimi Fleury, President of the Community of Concern, an initiative to educate parents and build partnerships to keep youth alcohol and drug free described the effects of alcohol and drugs on developing teens and how substance use impairs learning, performance, and judgment.

Maura Lynch of the Maryland State Attorney’s office explained that Maryland law allows police to cite a person as being “in possession” of alcohol or drugs even if that person has not drunk or used any drug but is at the party. She further explained the substantial costs associated with receiving a citation and hiring legal assistance. She also explained that a parent whose home has been used for underage drinking may receive a \$500 fine for each child who has received a citation; this fine is raised to \$1000 upon a second offense.

B-CC Assistant Principal Mr. Nardi explained the consequences for a student found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at school or at a school function. Both the police and parents are called. Possible consequences include suspension and a referral to an approved drug/alcohol addiction treatment program. If a student is caught selling or distributing drugs both the police and parents are called and the consequence may be expulsion. All students on athletic teams and their parents sign a contract at the beginning of each sport season affirming that the student will not use steroids, illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Student athletes found in violation of the contract are removed from their team.

Jane Harkaway, Acting Supervisor, Health & Physical Education, MCPS described how the MCPS health curriculum teaches students about healthy living and avoiding risky behaviors. She explained that the high school curriculum has been recently updated to reflect the latest scientific research that has found marijuana use to be addictive.

Parents engaged the speakers with a variety of questions about supervising and monitoring teen activities, drug testing (kits are available on line and at local pharmacies) and how to answer your child’s questions about your own history with drugs. Speakers and parents agreed on the importance of talking with other parents, and verifying that parents will be home and present at gathering of teens in their homes. Parents should ask other parents about the rules regarding alcohol use and teens in their homes. Parents and teens should establish a “code” that teen can use in a phone call or text which means “come get me, I need to come home.”

At the conclusion of the evening, the PTSA distributed a hand-out listing prevention and treatment resources for parents and provided information on a new drug abuse website and listserv for Bethesda area parents ([www.PreventTeenDrugAbuse.org](http://www.PreventTeenDrugAbuse.org)). The resource guide is available on the PTSA website.