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Not Everyone's Doing It!

By Sophie Braccini



Photo Sophie Braccini

if they are too drunk to drive, and encourages people to call 911 if they're at a party and someone appears to be in distress. "It will never be held against you, even if you are under the influence and over 18," said the group. According to California penal code 11376.5 a & b "it shall not be a crime for a person to be under the influence ... if that person, in good faith, seeks medical assistance for another person experiencing the overdose."

SADD's second objective was to show that it is possible to have a fun social life without alcohol. "They organized events where kids wouldn't feel pressure from their peers to drink in order to fit in," says Taxler. She cites a recent movie night at Miramonte that was alcohol-free and fun.

Miramonte SADD, with close to 40 members, decided to back Rich's campaign to support positive social norms. They made the "78%" signs and hung them across the school. Then on April 19, during a school assembly and talent show, Shepard and Kady Richardson revealed the meaning of the figure during intermission.

Since there is no SADD group at Campolindo High School, the leadership class took the project over and last Friday sent an email to all of the teachers revealing the meaning of the figure before telling their classmates.

Acalanes High School junior Bailey McQuain has been involved with SADD since it started last year. "We've met with Jaime (Rich) regularly," says the student. "She told me about the 78 percent campaign over the phone, and I told the idea to our group and we decided to participate."

McQuain says her objective was to try to make a difference in her school, raising awareness about the dangers of drunk driving and drinking in general.

"I don't think that there is a direct pressure on kids to drink; it is more indirect," she says. "If you are at a party, people think that everyone does it, and you feel left out if you don't." That's why she thought the idea of the "78%" signs was so good - to show that in fact a vast majority of kids don't make it a habit to drink.

McQuain says that most people thought it was cool, but they had a hard time believing it. "That's because everyone thinks that everyone drinks, but it's not the case," she says.

Lamorinda's three city councils signed a proclamation declaring April Alcohol Awareness Month. In Orinda, the proclamation was not only given to Rich, but to Miramonte SADD. In Lafayette, the proclamation was given to local SADD president Austin Franklin and to McQuain.

"With that 78 percent figure, kids saw that drinking is not a prevalent behavior among their peers," says Taxler. "It's not nerdy not to drink; in fact, you are in a super-majority if you don't."

For a few days last week the three Lamorinda high schools had a mysterious "78%" sign displayed on their campuses. Some wondered what it meant. The graduation rate? No, it must be higher than that. The meaning was disclosed April 19: 78 percent of freshmen and juniors drank no alcohol in the last 30 days (according to the most recent California Healthy Kids Survey).

"We wanted to reinforce a positive social norm about drinking," said Jamie Rich of the Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition, who was helped in the campaign by students from the high schools' Students Against Destructive Decisions club or the leadership group.

Both Miramonte and Acalanes have a SADD club. Miramonte's SADD was created by Steven Shepard, Drew Anderson, Bennett Stehr, Matt Matheny, and Will Suller in the fall. "They have been buddies for years," says Shepard's mother, Laura Taxler. "They play football together and wanted to change the attitude that says you have to drink to have fun and be cool."

Their first objective was to raise awareness about alcohol safety. SADD recommends students call Orinda Taxi

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