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Westlake Parent Connection

Helping parents keep their kids safe and healthy since 2003

A Parent to Parent Network (P2PN) Affiliate

Email Information Blast

March 25, 2009

***From Binge to Blackout:
A Mother and Son Struggle with Teen Drinking***
by Chris and Toren Volkmann

MEET the Authors
Westside Location April 2nd, Avon Lake

This dynamic book is written from both the mother's and son's viewpoints with an emphasis on alcohol education.

Toren's Story

Alcohol was my best friend, and I didn't want to stop drinking. I didn't quit drinking for my parents. I didn't quit drinking for my friends. I quit drinking because alcohol stopped working for me. I quit drinking because all the benefits that I saw in drinking slowly turned my life upside down. My life became a disaster, solely fueled by alcohol.

I lived my life in the exempt category, where no consequences applied. "I am the exception." Or so I thought. I guess you could say I lived and almost died by that rule. My moral compass was shot long before I went into rehab. No slap on the wrist stopped me in the past. Only time could reveal the worst of consequences. Over and over again, I woke up in the shadow of my blackouts, with shakes, sweats and fevers that were worsening. Something was finally going wrong. Against all my intentions, my choices finally caught up to me. What finally stopped me from drinking was misery: a complete loss of control, direction, and purpose.

From Binge to Blackout tells the story of how I could start out as a well-rounded, good-intentioned high schooler dabbling in booze and social drugs, to become a blackout drinker unable to make it in 'the real world' as a social drinker. Not drinking for me has become part of the solution and, as I am finding out, one day at a time, there is a lot more to life than drink specials, blackouts, and hangovers.

Chris's Story

Little did I know that my son had already become addicted to alcohol before college graduation, and that he had experimented with many other drugs as well. Toren had been a strong student, treated me well, and seemed bound for success. My ignorance of his abuse set me up for a fat education.

In as little time as one year after college graduation, Toren's whole future blew up before my eyes. I had to look at what had happened. It forced me to examine how we'd raised him, and what he had been doing while I thought he was a successful student in high school and college. I had to sort out how our family could carry on in a world that seemed to swirl around alcohol.

This is tough to do for a parent, to look at how you've nurtured your kid, to figure out what would have helped prevent a tragic situation. The turmoil of Toren's addiction brought about an examination not only of my son and my parenting, but information about the power of this addictive drug and its pervasive use in our society.

How can parents communicate with kids who see alcohol as fun and a rite of passage? What is the difference between U.S. kids' drinking habits and their contemporaries around the world? How can parents network with colleges if concerned about a student's risky drinking? How does drinking alcohol affect adolescents differently than adults? What are the trends with kids' drinking today and why do many of them choose to drink such huge quantities? What roles are we parents modeling for our kids when they see us drinking alcohol at social functions? These are all questions I discuss as I examine our youth alcohol culture.

No matter how a parent feels about drinking, it is imperative to learn about alcohol and the way kids are using it today. Alcohol is the most glamorous and preferred drug in our culture, for both youth and their parents. My story could be your story.

The Volkmanns will be appearing at four separate events across Northeast Ohio March 31 – April 2. These engaging speakers will share their firsthand experience and knowledge on the epidemic of teen drinking and have been featured on ABC's "The View" with Barbara Walters, PEOPLE Magazine, CBS Evening News and The New York Times. Hear Chris and Toren tell their riveting, enlightening, and heartbreaking story as they share how their family confronted the fear, pain, and denial that threatened to destroy them—and survived it.

- **March 31st** :3:30-5PM John Carroll University-Kulas Auditorium in the Clock Tower Building, 20700 North Park Blvd., University Hts
- **March 31st** :7:30-9PM John Carroll University-Kulas Auditorium in the Clock Tower Building, 20700 North Park Blvd., University Hts
- **April 1st** :7-8:30PM Cuyahoga Valley Career Center, 8001 Brecksville Rd., Brecksville

- **April 2nd**: 7-8:30PM Learwood Middle School Auditorium, 340 Lear Road, Avon Lake

News from the Drug-Free Action Alliance

Marketing Alcohol to Children --

In a recent press conference, Patricia Harmon, executive director of the Drug-Free Action Alliance talked about issues surrounding Alcopops; sweet, alcoholic beverages that are often described as a cross between alcohol, fruit juices, and soft drinks (i.e. Mike's Hard Lemonade).

Harmon said that underage drinking is a serious problem in the state of Ohio with devastating consequences to youth; alcohol is the number one substance abuse problem in America and more young people die - 5,000 per year - from alcohol-related causes than from all other illicit drugs combined.

With excessive sweetness that mimics the taste of familiar non-alcoholic beverages like lemonade, teas and fruit drinks, it is no wonder Alcopops are most popular with underage drinkers. Of 8th graders who drink, 77% consume alcopops, compared to only 30% of those aged 25 to 30.

Jessica Trickett, a senior at The Ohio State University, spoke about her substance abuse addiction and recovery. She said that she and her friends began drinking alcopops because of the sweet taste that they liked.

"Everyone I drank with when I was young drank the same stuff because it tasted good," Jessica told the audience gathered. "We wanted something that tasted sweet and fruity - like juice or pop."

For more information about talking to your kids about underage drinking visit:
http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/MakeAdiff.pdf

For more information about Alcopops visit:
<http://www.drugfreeactionalliance.org/documents/1pagefactsheetFINAL.pdf>

Westlake Wellness Coalition Update

The Westlake Wellness Coalition held a 2nd Drug Show and Tell Event on Wednesday, March 18, 2009. Over 100 people stopped by Westlake High School to see and learn about the drugs that the youth of today may be exposed to. This effort is a direct result of the Community Wellness Forum that was held in August of 2008.

Thank you to the Westlake PTA Council and Westlake Police for sponsoring this informative night for parents.

Romance Without Regret

Jason Evert, an international chastity speaker from Catholic Answers, will present a talk for teens and their parents Monday, April 6 at 7:30 at St. Raphael Catholic Church in Bay Village. [<more info>](#)

Substance Abuse Initiative's Run in the Park

WPC Board members Dani Altieri Marinucci and Lynda Appel ask you for your support as they run for the Substance Abuse Initiative's Run in the Park May 9th. You can join Dani and Lynda in the 5K run or make a tax-deductable pledge – either way you are promoting safe and drug-free communities in Northeast Ohio– contact <mailto:dani@parent2parentnetwork.org>. [<more info>](#)

Support the WPC

Your financial support not only allows the WPC to provide important programs for the community, but also serves as a tangible sign of community support for the WPC vision – making Westlake a community that is known for its parental outreach and is free from underage alcohol and tobacco use, illegal drug use, and violence.

Please make a contribution today – every little bit helps! [Download a donation form.](#)

The WPC is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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