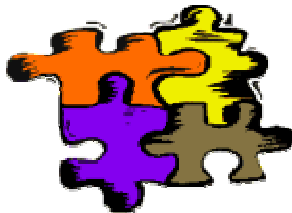


TAKE THE PLEDGE!

We cannot stop all kids from drinking. That is not the goal of the Family Pledge. We wish to do three things:

1. *Provide a safe social environment for youth in OUR OWN HOMES.*
2. *Send a clear, unambiguous, message to our children and all children that we care enough for their safety to risk their displeasure to try to protect them.*
3. *To inform other parents that if their children come to our home, they will be supervised and that alcohol and other drug use will not be tolerated.*

Members of the WPC developed the Pledge after extensive interviews, research and discussion. We are proud of the results and hope you will choose to join us in making Westlake a leader in **families communicating with families.**



Westlake Parent Connection

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The Family Pledge

Westlake Parent Connection



*Connect the Pieces—
Talk to Each Other*

Our Vision: A community that is known for its parental outreach and is free from underage alcohol and tobacco use, illegal drug use and violence.

What is the Family Pledge ?

The **Family Pledge** is NOT a new idea, just new to Westlake. The youth of Westlake are faced, almost daily, with pressures to use alcohol and illegal drugs. These pressures come from the media with their over glamorized advertising of alcohol and from the endless social messages and pressures to use all kinds of intoxicants. Sometimes, even those children who choose not to use, are forced to socialize with those who are using, if they are to socialize at all.

As individual parents we may feel helpless to protect a “young adult” without standing in the way of all social opportunity. The **Family Pledge** is a tool to address this problem.

Choosing to sign the **Family Pledge** and allowing your name and phone number to appear in the **Family Pledge Directory** serves two important purposes:

- **It encourages an open dialog between parents and their children regarding substance abuse and family expectations.**
- **It empowers parents by connecting a network of families who have taken the Family Pledge and have gone public with their support of these community norms.**

Communities across the nation have been using Pledges and Family Pledge Directories for years with positive results.

FAQ's

Q. I trust my children completely. Why would I need to be involved?

A. The Pledge Directory provides information for each family about the rules and limits set by the other families with whom their children interact. This can make it easier to ensure that your own child will enjoy social events without being put in uncomfortable positions because of a lack of parental supervision. In addition, it can help children, who might feel self-conscious that perhaps their parents are more strict than others, to know that many other parents have the same rules!

Q. Why do we need a Pledge Directory?

A. Experts report that defining for your children your expectations on acceptable and unacceptable behavior is a key factor in their making healthy choices.

Based on the Search Institute's survey of 100,000 young people from over 200 communities, researchers identified 40 environmental factors that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. Those students (**grade 6-12**) who have these environmental factors are LEAST likely to engage in high risk behavior. Environmental factors directly supported by a Pledge Directory include:

- Kids who feel safe at home, school, and in their neighborhoods;
- Families who have clear rules and consequences and monitor their children's whereabouts;
- Kids who believe it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Q. What about the liability of signing the pledge?

A. The Pledge is NOT a legal document, it is a statement of concern and intent. It is intended to facilitate communication between parents/guardians and children.

Q. Doesn't the Pledge Directory provide a false sense of security?

A. The Pledge is not intended to provide any guarantees. Rather it is a tool to help parents feel more comfortable in making a phone call and asking the tough questions, i.e. “My son is coming to your house for a party, are you planning to be home?”

Q. What if I feel that young people should be allowed to drink alcohol if they are properly supervised?

- A. You should not feel pressure to sign if you plan to serve alcohol to teens. However:
1. Physically and psychologically the adolescent is much more vulnerable to the effect's of alcohol than the mature adults. Biological researchers have proven that young people who begin drinking before age 15 are 4 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who began at age 21. The risk of alcohol dependency decreases by 14% with each increasing year of age of drinking onset.
 2. In Ohio, parents may be held liable for any injury or damage caused by a teenager who has consumed alcohol or drugs in their home.
 3. Adults who allow groups of teens to drink should know that teens who drink are more likely to drown, be a victim of violent injury, engage in high risk activities, and report higher rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease, including AIDS.

*Dr. Mike Riera, a noted psychologist and best-selling author of **Staying Connected to Your Teenager**, advises parents not to assume other adults will chaperone the same way they do and encourages a phone call before the child leaves the house.*

Mission:

The Westlake Parent connection is a non-profit parent led group assembled to educate, communicate, and network about tough issues confronting the youth and parents in the greater Westlake community.