Almost all parents today are dealing with how hard it is to raise a child/children. Part of that challenge is trying to raise a young person to be alcohol and substance free. Moreover, we are in an environment marked by opposite extremes making it more difficult. We are experiencing, and becoming accustomed to the advancement of technology, emergent of younger activist, the development of creative measures of prevention, and heighten attention to mental health issues. We are also witnessing incidents of mass gun violence, hyper racial moments of friction, an opioid crisis, and the illicit marketing and distribution of substances that are harder for us to detect and easier to acquire, particularly for children.

Simultaneously, as Binjai Shah, a writer for HuffPost India states “The younger population is much better poised to join conversations about all the ways in which we can change the world than even millennials were at that age. They’re at the forefront of protests, online campaigns and in general, are leading by example by being more socially conscious....”

How do parents address that their child has begun experimenting/using marijuana, vaping or drinking when underage and do something about it? Finding out about a child who is using one or more of these substances which all are illegal for someone underage, sometimes put parents in a position where they may not know what to do or what to say. Research informs us that the holidays make it more challenging. Some youth and families missed relatives and friends and/or experienced added stress and anxiety, while others were happy about the holidays and made plans for time off from work or school. The high school is working diligently to assist students by providing hands on opportunities to raise awareness about the critical dilemma of living with such opposite extremes.

Last year Nyack High School Clubs, Heroes & Cool Kids, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), Teen Council, a collaborative club between OCADA and the Nyack Center, Our Community Against Drug Abuse (OCADA) Coalition, and I are worked together in an effort to connect awareness and advocacy. While my focus is on utilizing opportunities to education on the dangers and impact of substances, some of which can be seen on the [Student Support Services Prevention](#) webpage, disseminating information, promoting healthy beliefs and clear standards along with a nonjudgmental confidential prevention counseling (to both students and families), OCADA has takes a direct approach to reaching the community. OCADA hosts community activities and Town Hall Meetings with informative guest experts and/or panel discussions. With the guidance of club advisors students continue to work together to provide sober weekend activities, in school opportunities for learning more about dangers and opportunities for advocacy. In fact, for the December 2019 (in school) High School FitFest, coordinated by Stephanie Ryan, HS Health Educator, The SADD Club took to lead by calling on students to sign a petition to “End the Marketing and Distribution of Vaping Products to Underage Individuals”. This effort is part of a larger movement taking place in New York City by high school students.

For more information and opportunities continue to read the newsletter, published monthly or view the [Student Support Services Prevention](#) webpage.