

For Immediate Release

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April 23, 2010



**Manhasset Community Comes Together
for Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking**

At its recent Town Hall Meeting, *Teens Don't Just Drink...They Drink to Excess*, Manhasset CASA became one of hundreds of community coalitions nationwide to alert parents to the risks of teen underage drinking and inform parents and the community how to take action to stop it.

Lisbeth Shibley, Executive Director of Manhasset CASA, welcomed parents and residents and discussed the importance of working together to address this community health issue. Ms. Shibley stated, "Our hope is to unite the community through education and dialogue so we can begin to change what has become an all too common and accepted norm: over the top, underage and binge drinking. The consequences of which can be devastating."

Superintendent of Manhasset Public Schools commended Manhasset CASA for its efforts to bring the community together for this important public health discussion. "Underage drinking is a most important topic yet it brings a great deal of discomfort in any discussion as people reexamine their own practices regarding drinking as an adult or parent." Manhasset CASA Project Director Cathy Samuels reviewed the results of the Bach Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment which indicated that alcohol continues to be the drug of choice for Manhasset youth and use is above the national norm. For further information regarding the results, you can go to the Manhasset CASA website at www.manhassetcasa.org.

Toren Volkmann, featured speaker and coauthor of From Binge to Blackout, told parents "Few students think about the problematic effects of continuous heavy drinking," says Toren, "Then suddenly, the party ends and they find themselves a feverish, shaky, paranoid halfwit, struggling to think, sleep, relax or eat."

Toren challenged the community to make a decision about their drinking styles, the alcohol culture, and our glamorized drinking scene. In speaking about his recovery, Toren explained, "I get to decide what kind of person I will become; I choose what kind of activities I participate in and how I interact with other people. These days I don't have the kind of regrets that I used to have. I don't have hangovers, or endure withdrawals every weekend and I am no longer enslaved to drugs and alcohol."

Manhasset CASA's local experts answered parent questions ranging from the legal and financial liability issues to parenting issues. When parents asked the panel "What can we do? Aren't they safer in our house? Besides they are only going to drink anyway?" Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, LICADD, answered, "As a treatment professional and as a parent, I'm not willing to concede that our kids are 'going to drink anyway.' Underage drinking is illegal and given what we now know

about brain chemistry, it places our kids at risk for developmental delays and future addiction. Because they get so many mixed messages elsewhere about alcohol, it's up to us as parents to remain consistent and refuse to compromise about our kids' health." Participating in the panel discussion was Manhasset's Nancy Morris, State Farm Insurance Agent/Owner; Oscar Michelen, Esq. "The Law Squad", and Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, Executive Director of the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (LICADD).

Toren Volkmann also presented the next day to Manhasset High School's 10th, 11th and 12th grade students. Junior and Seniors were able to hear Toren's important message of the health and safety consequences of underage and binge drinking. Manhasset High School Principal Dean Schlanger stated, "We were most fortunate to have Toren with us today to share his heartfelt journey. It is my wish for everyone to walk away thinking about the harmful effects of drinking. His story is most meaningful." In discussing Toren's visits to her 10th grade Health classes, Anna Eng, Health Teacher, said, "Students were engaged and asked insightful questions. They thought Toren's visit was very worthwhile and were touched by his testimony."

In light of the student results, CASA has embarked on a social marketing campaign *Parents Who Host Lose the Most: Don't be a party to underage drinking. It's against the law.* The campaign, developed by the Drug-Free Action Alliance, partners with members of the community in order to educate parents and residents to the health, safety and legal consequences of underage drinking.

For more information regarding the town hall meeting or if you would like to volunteer with Manhasset CASA, contact Cathy Samuels, Manhasset CASA at (516) 267-7548.