



## **Candid and Open Dialogue about Underage Drinking**

Manhasset CASA's recent Town Hall meeting served as confirmation to just how much and how often teens are drinking alcohol. The meeting featured parents, students, law enforcement and local experts who provided a candid and open dialogue addressing underage drinking.

Greeted by Charles Cardillo, Superintendent of Manhasset Schools and Lisbeth Shibley, Executive Director of Manhasset CASA, the program began with a brief overview of the Bach Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment Survey Results for students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12. The 2011 survey results continue to indicate that Manhasset youth in grades 10 and 12 are above the national norm when it comes to alcohol use and binge drinking.

New information was available to parents regarding how and where teens are getting alcohol. Manhasset CASA's Project Director, Cathy Samuels noted that "teens are predominantly getting their alcohol at local house parties or by giving someone else money to buy it for them. Parents need to take notice that teens are drinking alcohol in their own home without their permission as well as in someone else's home with an adult's consent."

Jeffrey Reynolds, LICADD, openly discussed the dangers of parents turning a blind eye to house parties as well as thinking it's safer for kids to drink in their own home under the false pretence of 'I can keep an eye on them and make sure they stay safe.' Dr. Reynolds stated, "Parents have a bigger influence on their kids than anyone or anything else. Given everything we now know about the risks and health consequences associated with underage drinking, we need to use that influence and convey messages to kids about alcohol that are supportive, but firm, direct and unambiguous."

Conversation was provided by a local parent who found out the hard way just how determined and excessive teens can be when they party on the weekends. Student panelists confirmed the popularity of alcohol at local parties and discussed the reality parents face if they are trying to keep their children alcohol free within the Manhasset community.

Addressing the Nassau County Social Host Law, Oscar Michelen, Esq., *The Law Squad*, offered information regarding the legal implications of adults knowingly serving alcohol to teens under the age of 21. Michelen stated, "The Social Host Law changed the playing field when it comes to allowing minors to drink in your home. Homeowners now face significant criminal and civil penalties and they can no longer turn a blind eye to this issue." Detective Pam Stark pointed out that the Nassau County Police will enforce the Social Host Law when teens age 18 and older are found present in a home where underage drinking is taking place, "Parents and teens age 18 and older have the responsibility by law to call the police when they are aware or know that alcohol is being consumed by a person below the legal age. Otherwise, you are breaking the law, not caring for the well-being of the kids and creating an irresponsible role model for the children."

Detective Sergeant Tara Comiskey, Deputy Commanding Officer Community Affairs, Nassau County Police Department, noted how imperative it is for parents to know where and who their children are hanging out with on the weekends. The detective noted that parents often meet for the first time when teens are arrested for underage consumption of alcohol. Detective Comiskey added, "The Police Department is pleased to assist Manhasset CASA in furthering educational opportunities to bring parents needed information for issues their children face. We look forward to continuing this relationship." Many parents confirmed how important it is for parents to communicate with each other when confronted with teens under the influence of alcohol.

The Town Hall Meeting served as CASA's kick-off for its Spring Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign *Underage Drinking Not a Minor Problem See It. Hear It. Talk About It. Parents Do Make A Difference*. The campaign will provide parents, grandparents and residents with prevention education and resources to address the prevalence of underage drinking in the community with focus on the importance of communicating with our children.

On Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. at the Manhasset Secondary School, CASA will host a Sector Meeting where it will discuss the campaign's community prevention initiatives to reduce underage drinking. *All community residents are invited to attend and join the effort.*

For more information regarding the Bach Harrison Survey Results or underage drinking go to [www.manhassetcasa.org](http://www.manhassetcasa.org) or call 516-267-7548.



**Seated left to right:** Lisbeth Shibley, Executive Director & President, Manhasset CASA; Detective Sergeant Tara Comiskey, Deputy Commanding Officer Community Affairs, Nassau County Police Department; Detective Pamela Stark, Nassau County Police Department; **Standing left to right:** Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, Executive Director, Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (LICADD); Oscar Michelen, Esq. The Law Squad; Dean Schlanger, Principal, Manhasset Secondary School.