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## **Underage Drinking affects your Teen's Brain because it's not fully developed until age 25!**

Manhasset CASA is proud to feature the work of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America to help raise awareness of its *Parents Who Host Lose the Most* Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign. In our efforts to educate the Manhasset community to the health, safety and legal consequences of underage drinking, the article "Adolescent Brain Development" has been provided by the Partnership to explain why teens make risky decisions and how it impacts their life later on:

"Everyone knows the importance of guiding and nurturing toddlers, whose brains are developing at warp speed. But what about the development of the teen brain? We're now learning that adolescents go through a similar wave of major development. From ages 13 to about age 25, a **pruning and strengthening process** is happening in their brains. During that time, the brain cells and neural connections that get used the least get pruned away and die off; those that get used the most get stronger.

This new knowledge about adolescent brain development explains why it's so important for parents to encourage teens to have healthy activities: The more time your teen spends learning music, the stronger those brain connections get. The same is true of the connections she uses for playing video games, mastering a sport, or watching TV.

Ironically, this period — when the brain is rapidly changing and most vulnerable to outside influences — is when teens are most likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol. Why? One reason may be because the brain region that's responsible for making complex judgments (the Prefrontal Cortex) isn't fully mature, and therefore is prone to being overpowered by the emotional or motivational regions that are more mature. Scientists believe this aspect of teenage brain development explains why young people sometimes use poor judgment and don't have good impulse control.

**Because of the huge changes happening in the teenage brain, it's possible that a decision your teen makes now may affect him for life.** (Brain scans, for instance, have linked alcohol abuse with decreased memory functioning.<sup>1</sup>) Just sharing that fact with your teen may help him to stop and think before he takes any chances, and even inspire him to make more healthy choices."

Next week's article will focus on "Behavior and the Teen Brain. For more information regarding the teen brain, go to "A Parent's Guide to the Teen Brain" at <http://www.drugfree.org/TeenBrain/science/index.html>."

The Parents Who Host Lose the Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking. It's against the law campaign, was developed by the Drug-Free Action Alliance, and 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 about the campaign or Manhasset CASA, call (516) 267-7548 or go to [www.manhassetcasa.org](http://www.manhassetcasa.org).