

**Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria  
QUARTERLY MEETING  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2008; 7:00-8:30 PM**

**Attendees\*:**

Allen Lomax, SAPCA Chair  
Amy Beal, parent  
Cindy Follmer, Inova Kellar Center  
Octavius Folton, JobLink/Teens Work  
Giordana De Altin Popiolek, CSB  
Becky Griesse, ACAP  
Liz Clarey, NOVAM  
Natalie Noel, Virginia Commonwealth Attorney's Office  
William Johnson, Police  
Monique Edwards, Sheriff's Office  
Margaret Orlando, Recreation Department  
Mary Riley, CSB & APHAC  
Mary-Jane Atwater, Atwater Communications  
Billy Hackenson, Episcopal High School & Alexandria Youth Council  
Leigh Hayes, Wright to Read  
Susan Draclisler, Friends of AMHC  
Veronica Aberle, AHD  
Mercedes Wilson, CSB  
Mike Mackey, Gang Prevention  
Priscilla Harp, Court Services  
Deborah Warren, CSB  
M. Walsh, ACPS  
Demorah Dimon, AHD  
Margaret Kirk, AHD  
Shelly Morgan, parent  
Tricia Bassing, CSB  
Jacqueline Coachman, DHS  
Carrie Fesperman, Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria

\*All community sectors represented except media, religious/fraternal organization, and volunteer or civic group.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:** A. Lomax welcomed SAPCA members and began introductions.

**2. BRIEFING ON THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT:** J. Short and C. Esposite-Smythers of George Mason University presented the report of their analysis of the Developmental Assets Report, YRBSS, and the Qualitative Assessment of Alexandria Youth Substance Use. The report explored several themes including the: 1) High rates and early onset of youth substance use; 2) Early availability of substances; 3) Lack of effective enforcement and consequences for substance use; 4) Lack of effective parenting skills and parental communication with schools; 5) Need for more psychoeducation about youth substance abuse; and 6) Need for more effective community substance use prevention activities and practices. For each theme, the report offered recommendations of community strategies or actions to begin addressing the problem.

A. Lomax then opened the floor to SAPCA members to offer suggestions and comments on the report and its recommendations. Overall, SAPCA members felt that the report's recommendations seemed logical and practical. They were impressed with the emphasis on parental involvement and commitment. Additional comments included:

- The report suggests conducting the YRBSS survey every year, but currently the plan is to collect it only every other year. Just getting the YRBSS into the schools every other year was a lot of progress. SACPA is also exploring getting the private schools to conduct a YRBSS survey. We're still unsure what role SAPCA would play in this effort. M. Walsh volunteered to engage private school administrators in a conversation about the technical piece involved in conducting YRBSS.
- While correlation data is excellent and ACPS is fortunate to have it, causal data would be particularly powerful. It would be good for SAPCA to investigate collecting causal data.
- We need an inventory of existing programs that address positive youth development as well as substance abuse prevention.
- There is a linkage between sports and drinking. Students tend to drink before football games, we should consider using the games as a point of intervention.
- We need to know how we can get the "biggest bang for our buck". What strategy would make the most impact?
- The Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP) highlights the need for improved parental skills, as does the City's Gang Prevention Initiative. SAPCA and these other groups might benefit from collaboration in this area.
- Parents are good at saying no to drugs in their own home and using scare tactics, but not as good at monitoring their children's substance use in other people's homes (e.g., calling another child's parents to see if they allow teens to use alcohol in their homes). When targeting parents, we should include suggestions to address this behavior in our messages.
- We should consider a student competition (e.g., essay, drawing, multi-media, and video) as a way to spread the message about substance use prevention.
- We need to involve youth in developing strategies. Billy Hackenson is looking into social media options.

**3. NEXT STEPS WITH THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT:** MJ Atwater described the communications plan, explaining that it was a tool to educate the community at large and its leaders about current substance abuse in Alexandria, promote buy-in, and outline how people could get involved as SAPCA moves forward. So far, we have made several inroads in getting the word out about the report:

- A. Lomax was featured on Comcast Spotlight and talked about SAPCA's recent study results. It is hoped that he will make another appearance on Comcast Spotlight to discuss the GMU report.
- We've been building resources on SAPCA's website: <http://www.alexhealth.org/partnership/sapca.html> .
- Alexandria Times ran an op-ed about substance use prevention that featured information from the GMU report.
- We're planning to draft a presentation template about the results and recommendations from the report that can be adapted to different audiences including community businesses, schools, and neighborhood associations. This will be developed over the next month. If anyone is a member of a group that would be interested in hearing about the report's results, please invite SAPCA to present. Also, people's help would be welcome in developing and adapting the PowerPoint to different audiences.

- We are planning to schedule meetings with the mayor, city council, the city manager, the school board, parents, and youth to update them on the report and discuss the recommendations.
- Virginia Paving will feature an ad about SAPCA and Friends of AMHC on the side of one of its vacuum trucks until March 2009.
- The Arlington/Alexandria Extra section of the Washington Post is planning to write an article featured on the front page about SAPCA and its report. A reporter will be interviewing A. Lomax and a youth member of SAPCA.
- M.J. Atwater underscored that we need SAPCA members help to get the word out to community groups, neighbors, and the wider community.

**4. OVERVIEW OF THE DRUG FREE COMMUNITY GRANT.** A. Lomax announced that SAPCA had received a 5-year \$600,000 Drug Free Communities grant from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The grant has two major goals: 1) Establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, private nonprofits, and federal, state, local and tribal governments to support the efforts of community coalitions to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth; and 2) Reduce substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults by addressing the factors in the community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse. The first year will be spent strengthening the coalition, Now that we have the grant there is a lot that needs to be done.

Grant includes funding for SAPCA Coordinator. Employment announcements were available at the meeting, position has since closed. City mandated that the position was first made available to City employees. Initial interviews will take place 11/10/08. If a candidate is not selected, the position will be open to anyone. Membership will be notified.

Also, as of 9/30/08, everyone needs to start tracking the time they volunteer to SAPCA. There is a matching funds requirement in the grant. We can match funds by tracking and quantifying time people spend working on SAPCA initiatives. Members should keep a log each month and send the log to Tricia Bassing and the SAPCA coordinator once that person is hired. SAPCA members should not include time at SAPCA meetings as we record this time through sign-in sheets.

**5. SAPCA DRAFT ACTION PLAN:** A. Lomax presented a work plan that is being drafted to begin moving forward on grant activities.

**6. SAPCA PROPOSED BYLAWS:** A. Lomax presented a draft of bylaws for approval by SAPCA members. There were no changes proposed and SAPCA members unanimously voted to approve the bylaws. A Nominating Committee to nominate SAPCA officers and board was established. Amy Beal volunteered to lead the committee. Tricia Bassing and Deborah Warren also volunteered to join the committee. If members are interested in joining the board or being an officer, they should send a note of their interest to Amy.

## **7. OTHER UPDATES**

T. Bassing had several announcements.

- The DFC grant includes an administrative assistant to the SAPCA coordinator with flexible hours for 10 hours a week. We will likely wait to hire the assistant until the coordinator is on board. Hiring will go through a temp agency. Contact Tricia Bassing if you or someone you know might be interested. More details to come.

- ACPS has a Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention Advisory Committee to the school board that shapes school policy around substance abuse. SAPCA members interested should consider applying,

**8. NEXT MEETING DATES**

Brief Election Meeting: Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup> from 7 – 8 p.m. at the Minnie Howard Media Center to elect officers presented by the Nominating Committee.

Next quarterly SAPCA meeting: Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> from 7 – 8:30 p.m.