

PREVENTION PRESS

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The Colts Neck Municipal Alliance's mission is to reduce the incidence, prevalence, and impact of alcoholism and drug abuse in the local community through planning for and purchasing services, projects, and programs that provide prevention and education.



COLTS NECK
TOWNSHIP

IN THE NEWS

A Letter from Jail: *The Life and Opinions of an Addict*

The following feature is adapted from a letter written by Chris, who grew up in Colts Neck and is currently incarcerated for the fifth time due to behaviors related to drug and alcohol addictions. Chris is referred to only by his first name out of respect for his family's privacy. He wrote the letter from jail, specifically for local publication, to share his painful journey in the hopes that young people will learn from the mistakes that wasted his life and ruined his relationships. Chris concluded his letter with the words, "the life and opinions of an addict." The quotes throughout the feature are all directly from Chris's letter.

"I started drinking at about 12, so 25-plus years now. It has progressively gotten heavier and heavier...some days starting from the time I woke up."

"I started off okay. I was an altar boy, in the youth group at church, a first aid cadet. I spent time with my family and [played] soccer. The more I drank...the more [it] stopped mattering. Grades dropped...and I wound up in special behavioral schools."

"At first, it was just something to do with friends. We saw it on tv, in the movies. We watched older people around us. It looked like everyone was having fun, and I wanted to, too."

"[Alcohol] was never hard to get. We would hang with older people who had it or could get it. We swiped some here and there from our parents. We would pay people to buy it for us and at times even steal. If we wanted it, we got it, and it didn't matter what."

"Everyone is different, but between tv, movies, Internet, peer pressure, advertising, and even in [school], it's an in-your-face thing. It's just hard to avoid, now more than ever."



Chris started drinking at 12 years old as a pastime with friends, which turned into a lifetime struggle with alcohol and drugs, a pattern of losses, and a cycle of incarcerations. Chris recalls how drinking was very visible on tv and in movies and advertisements. He would also see it through observing the behaviors of adults, and it seemed like everyone consuming alcohol was having fun. He remembers how easy it was to get alcohol underage by hanging out with older people who would provide it or get it for him and his friends. They would also swipe some from their parents or even resort to stealing it.

Although Chris started off okay, active in his church and soccer, spending time with his family, and serving as a first aid cadet, in time, it all

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A Letter from Jail: *The Life and Opinions of an Addict*

stopped mattering as he continued to drink more. His grades dropped and behavioral problems surfaced, resulting in multiple school changes and eventual placement in a special behavioral school. In an attempt to get him away from certain people and places, Chris's parents sent him from Colts Neck to live with his grandmother, but it did not improve matters. Even a court-ordered foster care program failed to serve as a wake-up call, and the bad choices continued.

"I lost a lot of friends and made a lot of bad and dangerous choices... that could have killed me. One time, a friend and I drank a full bottle of Jack [Daniels]. After, I woke up on the roof of a barn and stumbled home. My parents took me to the hospital that night because I was so drunk, they had to check for alcohol poisoning. And that wasn't the last of it.... Life continued to go downhill. [I was] in and out of jail as soon as [I was] old enough."

Chris does not remember everything he experienced due to many black outs and missing time, which he says is definitely a scary, negative consequence of his addictions. Chris found himself in and out of jail as soon as he was old enough to wind up there, and there were points where he was homeless and stealing to support himself and his drug and alcohol habits.

The list of offenses and charges Chris has faced includes multiple traffic violations, possession of controlled substances, trespassing, domestic violence, shoplifting, theft, assault, property damage, battery, check fraud, and two hit and run accidents. Currently, Chris is in Wisconsin serving his fifth prison stint and has had 23 county stays in Brown County, Wisconsin alone, since moving to the state in 1999. Between jail time and parole, Chris says he hasn't had much street time as an adult and has been locked up more than not, which he considers a safer alternative for himself and others in light of his substance and alcohol abuse and associated behaviors.

Chris regrets hurting others and not spending time with his 15-year-old daughter, Mackenzie, who doesn't know he is her father. Chris started his trips to prison when Mackenzie was only one and a half years old. He also has a five-year-old daughter, Kaylee, who was born while he was in prison; he has never met her because of his lifestyle.

Painful memories of losing jobs, apartments, family, and friends haunt Chris, as does all of the time and money he wasted on addiction. He attempted several times to attend school and pursue degrees, all of which failed between addiction and jail time. Chris recalls three suicide attempts and a lot of dangerous behaviors that could have ended his life, although he never stopped to think or care. He remembers his uncle and grandfather passing and being unable to be there with his family to mourn their losses.

The multiple times Chris was sent for mandatory treatment and assistance did not help him, he says because his innate stubbornness kept him stuck on doing things his way. Chris admits that he needs to lose his stubbornness to change his life. After serving his current sentence, he

would like to return to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings and join a good after-care program. He also wants to take care of his mental health and secure the proper medications and treatment for his bipolar disorder, depression, and anxiety. He is currently pursuing support in these areas while in jail.

Chris expresses determination to push forward to rebuild his life and spend time with his daughters. He would like to find work and perhaps try school again. He also hopes to reunite with his sober friends, but feels uncertain if they will bother with him again. Chris says that although he keeps falling, he has never given up. He is most regretful for all of the time he has wasted for himself and others, as well as for all of the pain he has caused those around him.

"If you feel your kid is using or in trouble, talk to [him or her]. Don't accuse and attack. Be supportive and understand. Get information for you and offer it to your child...."

"Kids, for those who experiment at any point in life, don't let it get out of control and change you, which it can. Look at me. We can't always see problems within [ourselves], and sometimes, it's too late, you've lost and missed out on life. All I've given up...wasn't worth any of it. Get information, know what you're doing, and ask for help when needed. Better yet, think about everyone that could get hurt, including [your]self if all goes wrong. Think it through."

Concerned for today's youth, Chris feels drugs and drinking are more of an "in-your-face thing" now more than ever due to exposure to tv, movies, online resources, peer pressure, and advertising, as well as what goes on in school. He wants parents to be proactive in getting the right information about what's out there and talking to their kids, without accusations or attacks. He feels parents should respond with support and understanding and communicate without backing their children into a corner, which can cause negative reactions out of spite.

Chris advises kids to ask for help when they feel things are out of control or if someone expresses concern over their behaviors, before it becomes too late and before they lose too much in life. He uses his own mistakes and consequences to warn others about what can happen, acknowledging that we often fail to see our own problems. He cautions kids to stop and consider everyone that could get hurt by their negative actions and to think through all that could be lost or wasted, using his own life as an example.

"The biggest regret I have is all I've wasted...and all of the wasted time, time for myself and the time I've taken from others, the time I've given to addiction, all of the pain I've caused to everyone in and around my life. Everyone's been hurt and felt the negative impact...I know it hurts because I feel the same hurt daily."

Do You Speak Their Language?

Code Talk and Texting Can Signal Danger for Your Teen

Teens using unfamiliar code words and acronyms when texting, messaging, or talking with peers could be a warning sign that they are engaging in potentially harmful behaviors they want to conceal from others. Also, using the jargon and slang specific to a particular group or culture usually signals familiarity and engagement with the group's actions and behaviors. For example, if someone references marijuana by its alternative names like "420" or "burrito," it probably indicates they are regularly exposed to it, just like emergency medical staff would refer to a heart attack as "cardiac arrest" or "code blue."

The lists below can help parents understand the cryptic messages their teens may be sending or receiving, indicating cause for concern.

Some Commonly Used Texting Codes

9: parent watching	99: parent gone
420: marijuana	1174: party meeting
Broken: hung over from alcohol	CD9/ Code 9: parents around
CID: acid, the drug	DOC: drug of choice
KPC: keeping parents clueless	LMIRL: let's meet in real life
P999: parent alert	PAW: parents are watching
PIR: parent in room	POS: parent over shoulder
TWD: texting while driving	#ZZZZZ: smoking a joint

Drug References

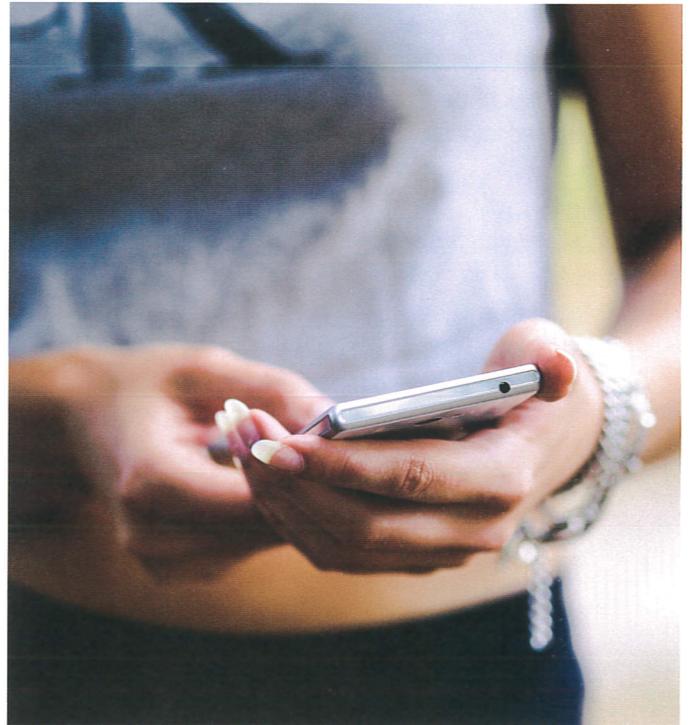
Dextromethorphan (DXM): medicine used in over-the-counter cough suppressants and abused for its hallucinogenic effect, known as Dex, Dexion, DM, poor man's X, candy, Skittles, Tussin, and CCC (referring to Coricidin HBP cough and cold, a particular brand); users are known as syrup heads and consuming cough syrup to get high is known as robo-tripping

Prescription cough syrup with codeine: mixed with soda and fruit-flavored hard candy for a feeling of euphoria, known as purple "drank," syrup, sizzurp, and lean

Ritalin: prescription used to treat ADHD and abused as a stimulant, known as kibbles and bits and pineapple; blue boogars references snorting it

Ketamine: an anesthetic used for humans and animals and abused as a hallucinogen, known as Special K, breakfast cereal, K, ket, jet, and cat valium

Marijuana: known as blunt, reefer, grass, ganja, kind bud, 420, Mary Jane, pot, weed, hay, ashes, burrito, nuggets, herb, charge, and broccoli



Heroin: known as big H, H, horse, smack, tar, train, white lady, dope antifreeze, brown sugar, junk, wings, Hazel

Cocaine: known as snow, Charlie, crack, coke, dust, flake, nose candy, powder, toot, white, yahoo, wings, and white lady; crack cocaine is known as baseball

Methamphetamines: known as crank, meth, speed, chalk, fire, glass, and white cross; crystal meth is known as ice

Ecstasy (MDMA): known as Molly, Adam, E, bean, clarity, essence, roll, XTC, love drug, and stacy

Candy flipping: combining LSD (acid) and ecstasy

Pharming: going through a medicine cabinet for medications to abuse to get high

Tweaking: getting high on amphetamines

Partnership for Drug-free Kids www.drugfree.org/drug-guide/ provides a list of common street names for drugs, with pictures and information about each drug.

Summer Is the Deadliest Time for Teen Drivers: AAA Research Shows Top Distractions Causing Teen Car Crashes



The 100 days of summer between Memorial Day and Labor Day are the deadliest time of year for teen drivers, with an average of 260 teens dying during each summer month due to car

crashes. The risk of death associated with teen driving also increases for passengers, pedestrians, and occupants of other vehicles.

According to AAA¹...

- 5,000-plus deaths over the past five years have been attributed to crashes involving teen drivers during the "100 Deadliest Days"
- An average of 10 people die daily during the summer months due to crashes with teens behind the wheel
- 60% of teen car accidents are caused by driving while distracted.

Top 3 Driving Distractions Causing Teen Car Crashes:

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety studied over 2,200 crash videos of teen drivers as part of an eight-year research project started in 2007. The videos, recorded using in-car dash cameras, captured the following top three distractions moments before the teen drivers crashed:

1. Talking or paying attention to other passengers (15% of the crashes)
2. Talking, texting, or using a cell phone (12% of the crashes)
3. Paying attention to something other than a cell phone (11% of the crashes)¹

Approximately 1,022 people die each year as a result of teen driver accidents, indicating the critical importance of promoting teen driver safety year-round.¹

¹AAA Reveals Top Driving Distractions for Teens as '100 Deadliest Days' Begin",

<http://newsroom.aaa.com/2016/06/aaa-reveals-top-driving-distractions-teens-100-deadliest-days-begin/>



Empty your medicine cabinet and save a life! Drop unwanted prescriptions in the Project Medicine Drop box at the Colts Neck Police Department during regular business hours.

www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/meddrop/



For more information on the Colts Neck Alliance, community events, or how to get involved, contact Anita Dedalis, acting Alliance coordinator, at 732-308-4505.

The Colts Neck Alliance can be found online at www.colts-neck.nj.us/local/cnalliance/index.htm.

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<http://gcada.nj.gov/alliance>

Please note, the Colts Neck Municipal Alliance is not responsible for any resources referred. This publication is for informational purposes only, and we do not endorse any of the listed resources.



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