

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Crystal meth lethal

The "Just Say No" mantra is not enough to keep your kids safe from potentially lethal drugs, like crystal meth now widely available, especially in smaller communities and rural areas across Ontario.

The RCMP says they're seeing increasing use of methamphetamines including ecstasy, PCP (angel dust) and this dangerous group's latest deadly addition, crystal meth. While these drugs are available in larger cities, crystal meth use is most prevalent in small town Ontario where there's a supply of chemical ingredients common in farm products like ammonia, police say.

"Parents in smaller communities may not think this kind of viper drug is available to their kids," says Cynthia Kiy, a social worker at Covenant House, a Toronto youth shelter. "But a great many of the youth we see who are struggling with its serious physical and mental effects have come to us from small town Ontario."

"This drug is so highly addictive that trying it even once can lead kids into a highly dangerous and potentially fatal nightmare that can destroy families," Cynthia says.

Crystal meth is more addictive than crack cocaine or heroin. When inhaled or smoked, it triggers an intense rush or 'flash' and then a feeling of euphoria, loss of appetite and heightened alertness that lasts for up to 12 hours.

It's cheap and can be had for about \$10 a hit or "point" It is an odorless, white crystalline powder that also dissolves easily in water or alcohol, although it also comes in capsule form. Also known as ice, glass, crystal or tina, it is made in clandestine, unsanitary amateur labs with easily accessible ingredients like cold medicine, red iodine and phosphorus. It may also include Drano, ammonia and lithium taken from batteries.

Crystal meth has serious health risks. Addicts may experience serious adverse psychological effects such as delusions, psychotic episodes and memory loss. They may commit impulsive acts of violence. Long-term use can lead to permanent brain, liver and kidney damage.

Sadly, there is no quick fix for this dependency. Once it takes hold. Parents who notice any drastic changes in their child's personality or habits should look for warning signs such as declining grades, withdrawal from family and friends, erratic behaviour, agitation, extended alertness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, weight loss and increased demands for money, among others.

Covenant house says there is no substitute for being an active, involved parent in controlling the use of the drug. Keep the lines of communication open with your child. Start early and talk often. This is not a subject to leave for the school or your kids' friends to handle.

Know who your kids' friends are, where they are and what they're doing, Covenant House advises. Good advise for parents everywhere but especially in small towns and rural areas.



NO GOOSE POOP: When the decoy geese which the Beermans, Georgina and David Beerman of Rural Rockwood were stolen in 2006 there was a universal display of sympathy. New geese arrived February of this year and they are up their unusual antics. Here they are enjoying a drive-in movie in an assortment of vehicles. Too late to catch in now on Hwy 7 curve just east of Rockwood. Now they've gone back to school.

POSSE supporter says it has never receive taxpayers' funds

To the editor,

I am writing in response to the article and the recent editorial in the New Acton Tanner regarding Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) Project's request for sustainable funding to Halton Region's Health and Social Services Committee.

I don't believe that POSSE was contacted by anyone from The New Tanner to learn first hand the facts of what POSSE offers to the community and what is paid for by "taxpayers." I am a supporter of POSSE's work, so I called to enquire about the facts, and I share them with you and your readers. I interviewed Kimm Kent, who helped start the program, and who has been running it for several years.

Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) is a free service providing training, street level outreach, information and support to encourage safer decision making in reducing the risks associated with drug use, sex, homelessness, violence

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and discrimination. POSSE is a harm reduction and human rights project, run by youth for youth between the ages of 15-24, living in North Halton.

POSSE also provides youth with rides to shelters, food banks, and accompanies them to obtain government services and crisis intervention. POSSE is currently funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and United Way of Halton Hills and United Way of Milton.

POSSE has been operating in North Halton for four years outreaching over 2,000 contacts annually. Youth are trained as outreach workers and 6 youth (2 from Acton, 2 from Georgetown and 2 from Milton) receive an honoraria of \$10 per hour to participate. This year from January to June 2007 POSSE had 63 youth attend

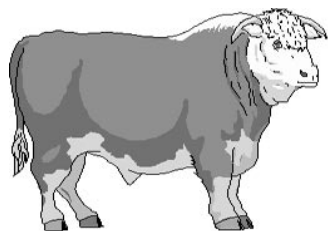
training. The outreach workers meet youth where they are at... the mall, parks, on the street, etc., as a prevention, early intervention and harm reduction strategy to reduce HIV, Hepatitis C, overdose, and other forms of harm.

Harm reduction is also a way to let drug users know someone cares if they live or die. In 2006, POSSE made 433 client contacts providing support and/or safer drug use information kits, including safer crack use kits, to drug users as a early intervention and harm reduction strategy. Crack users can both inject and smoke crack. POSSE has seen a shift from injecting to smoking crack, demonstrating a need for crack users to have access to safer crack use information kits. As a harm reduction strategy smoking crack is safer than injecting, although it is still a high risk activity.

You asked the question, "Should taxpayers pay for crack kits?" I believe taxpayers should pay

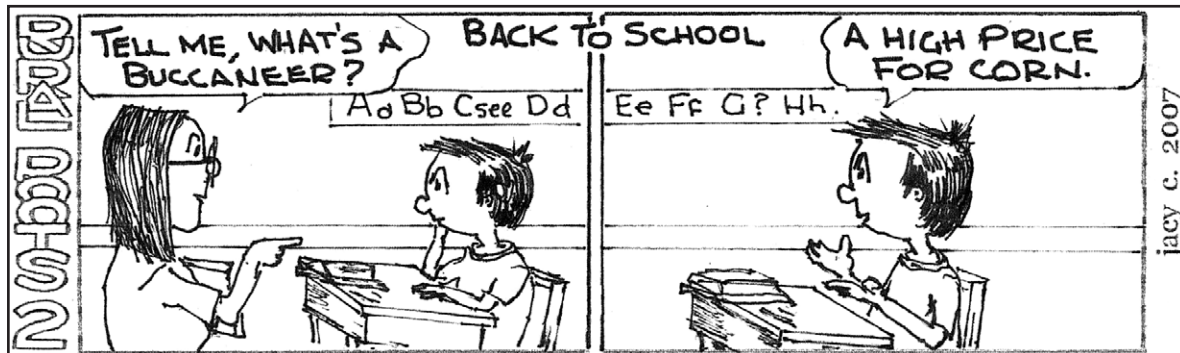
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What's Your Beef?



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to the Editor!

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