

Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 344-5100

November 2006

The JAC Perspective



The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County ... assisting youth and their families to seek the treatment and programs they need to lead productive, crime free lives.

CALENDAR

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

November 2
1:30 p.m.

Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex (formerly known as
Regional Service Center)
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165

Juvenile Sanctions Team

November 9
1:30 p.m.
Lee JAC

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Board

November 15
1:30 p.m.

Southwest Florida Workforce
Development Board

**Law enforcement should
call ahead to**

344-5161

or

344-5171

**when bringing an
arrested youth
to the JAC.**

Smoking Can Be Early Warning Sign

Many parents would breathe a sigh of relief to find that their kids were only smoking cigarettes and not using illegal drugs or alcohol. They might think that tobacco is not as harmful as illegal drugs and not immoral. What parents may not know about tobacco use is that it consistently occurs early in the sequence of other problem behaviors of youth. The average path to addiction involves that first puff on a cigarette at age twelve, a drink of alcohol at around twelve and a half, and then at age fourteen an introduction to illegal substances with marijuana. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 12

to 17 year olds who smoke cigarettes are:

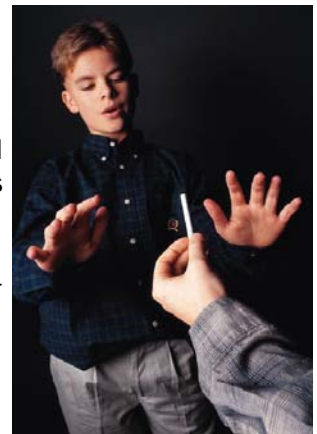
- 14 times more likely to abuse alcohol,
- 100 times more likely to smoke marijuana, and
- 32 times more likely to use cocaine than their nonsmoking peers.

When a young person starts to smoke, it is an alarm that he or she may be getting involved in other risky behaviors. Current thinking in public health science is that, if tobacco use can be prevented in the first place, it can have a big impact on preventing or delaying a host of other destructive behaviors among youth.

Amendment 4 Targets Youth Tobacco Use

On November 7th, Florida voters will have an opportunity to consider Amendment 4, a constitutional amendment on youth tobacco control. Amendment 4 would require the Florida Legislature to annually fund a comprehensive, statewide tobacco education and prevention program to primarily target youth and other at-risk Floridians. In 1997, Florida won a landmark legal victory against the tobacco industry to recover the costs incurred in caring for sick smokers. Florida now receives more than \$360 million annually from the tobacco settlement. The state legislature designated a portion of the funds generated from this settlement to create the Florida Youth Tobacco Control Program. This provided between \$37.3 million and \$70 million for the program during the first five

budget years. Florida's youth tobacco control program became a national model due to its successful outcomes. Smoking rates in Florida dropped 58% among middle school students and 37% among high school students. Despite its proven success, funding for the program was cut to \$1 million per year by the Florida Legislature after five years. Meanwhile, the tobacco industry spends over \$1 billion a year in Florida, (continued p. 2)



Life Skills Center: An Alternative to Traditional School

A Life Skills Center opened in August at 3637 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd., #104, in Ft. Myers. The Life Skills Center is a public charter school that provides an alternative educational program for students, ages 16 to 21, who have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out of school. It is specifically designed to assist students who are experiencing difficulties with the routine of traditional public schools. Students have the same graduation requirements as students in traditional schools and earn a state-certified high school diploma—not a GED. Instruction is primarily computer-based, with qualified teachers who serve as fa-

ilitators to guide students' learning. Students attend classes five days a week with four hour sessions each day. Two different session schedules are available during the day. The school emphasizes career preparation and employment. Students are required to maintain employment while attending. Applications are accepted at any time of the year. Credits from other schools can transfer to the Life Skills Center. There is no tuition. Life Skills Centers can be found in other states and in other Florida communities. For more information, call 332-3484, or visit the Life Skills Centers web site at www.lifeskillscenters.com.



The JAC welcomes Melissa Smith, our newest FGCU intern. Melissa assists with compiling data reports and greets the public. She is shown here with one of our more unusual visitors on October 31st.

Amendment 4 (cont.)

mostly targeting teens. (Only 5% of new customers for tobacco companies are over the age of 21.) Annual funding for the tobacco prevention/education program through this amendment would be 15 percent of the 2005 tobacco settlement payments to Florida, adjusted annually for inflation (estimated at \$57 million for 2007). Non-partisan information on all six of the constitutional amendments on this year's ballot can be found at www.votesmartflorida.org.

Youth, Family, & Community Partnership

One of the JAC's many community partnerships is with the Youth, Family & Community Partnership of Southwest Florida. YFCP staff serve as a resource to the JAC's Truancy Intervention Program. YFCP provides coordinated services to at-risk youth, ages 8 to 13, and their families. Program goals include decreasing school absenteeism, improving academics, and improving behavior. YFCP staff work with the family to develop a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary family service plan. They assist youth and their families in accessing appropriate resources in the community. The YFCP facilitates collaboration between the family, school, and community. For more information or to make a referral, contact Kathie Green, Program Coordinator, at 590-7833.

New Groups Start at the JAC

Parent/Adolescent Substance Abuse Intervention Group

Begins Tuesday, November 28th.

Parent/Adolescent Anger Management Group

Begins Thursday, November 30th

Both groups run for 7 weeks each from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. There is no charge. Call 772-1211 or 344-5115 for more information. The groups are provided by Southwest Florida Addictions Services.



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.