

Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
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www.swfjac.org

April 2007

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

Diversion Committee

April 2
11:00 a.m.
Lee JAC

Kids & Guns Forum

April 4
6:30 p.m.
Fort Myers High School Auditorium
2635 Cortez Boulevard

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

April 5
1:30 p.m.
Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex (formerly known as
Regional Service Center)
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165

Juvenile Sanctions Team

April 12
1:30 p.m.
Lee JAC

Prevention Network

April 17
11:30 a.m.
Lee JAC

Law enforcement should call ahead to

**344-5161
or 344-5171**

when bringing an arrested youth to the JAC.

Spring Break Is Risky Time For Youth

“Spring Break” may conjure up images of sand castles and beach volley ball for some, but today’s version of Spring Break may not be so innocent. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, more teens than ever are putting themselves at risk



during Spring Break. Travel industry experts estimate that 15% of young people who travel to “party destinations” during Spring Break are high school students. With unsupervised time, money to spend, and peer pressure to “have fun,” even teens that do not travel out of town can have more temptations to engage in risky behaviors during Spring Break. There are steps that parents can take to help keep their teens safe. Par-

ents need to be especially clear and specific with teenagers about rules on substance use and the consequences for breaking the rules. It is important for adults to talk candidly about the risks of drug and alcohol use, including riding with someone under the influence, driving under the influence, alcohol poisoning, violence, and sexual assault. Discuss different scenarios and how to handle
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More teens start using marijuana, cigarettes and alcohol for the first time between the spring and summer months than at any other time during the year.

Kids and Guns Community Forum

“Florida Boy, 16, Shot By Friend With Stolen Gun” “2-Year-Old Finds Gun, Accidentally Shoots Self” Tragic headlines about youth and guns occur all too often. The risks of children and teens having unsupervised access to guns are all too real and can have fatal consequences. The Lee County Juvenile Justice Council invites parents to a community forum on “Kids and Guns” to learn how to keep children and teens safe from guns. The forum will be held on Wednesday, April 4th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Fort Myers High School Auditorium, 2635 Cortez Blvd. The keynote speaker will be Bob Pastula, Assistant Chief with the U.S. Marshall Services. A panel will include participants



from the Office of the State Attorney, the Fort Myers Police Department, the Cape Coral Police Department, and the Lee County Sheriff’s Office. A limited number of free gun locks will be distributed. The forum is coordinated by the Lee County Juvenile Justice Council’s Kids and Guns Committee in recognition of Juvenile Justice Week .

Talk To Kids About Fire Threat

Lower-than-normal rainfall during the past year has left the state of Florida with a drier-than-normal dry season, creating a dangerously high potential for wildfires. Lee County has one of the highest drought indexes in the state. The Lee County Board of County Commissioners has declared a State of Local Emergency and an Emergency Resolution prohibiting open burning and other outdoor ignition sources. The JAC would like to remind parents, teachers, and youth leaders to include youth in discussions about the current fire threat. Research has shown that the majority of normal children possess a fascination about fire and nearly one-half have

engaged in fire play. Even though the majority of fires set by youth are started out of curiosity, not malice, the damage they cause can be just as devastating. Fire play or fire experimentation can be a precursor for the crime of arson. According to the FBI, juveniles account for 42.7% of arson offenses nationwide. It is important for adults to talk to youth about the possible devastating effects of fire – that it can destroy property, injure others, or take lives. It is also important for adults to talk to youth about the realities of the law, that setting a fire can result in a felony charge of arson. Set a good example. Most youth learn how to use fire by



watching the adults around them (most often their parents). Keep matches and lighters out of reach of young children, and if necessary, lock them up. If adults see that a child is overly fascinated with fire, don't ignore the obvious. Habitual fire setting can be a symptom of underlying emotional issues. In this case, seek assistance from a professional mental health specialist.

Spring Break Is Risky Time For Youth (cont.)

pressures, including offers of drugs or alcohol and other risky situations. While most teens manage to stay out of serious trouble, it is important for parents to monitor how teens are spending unsupervised time, even if they are spending the time at home. Parents should ask questions. "Where are you going?" "What will you be doing?" "Who are you going to be with?" "Who are your friends' parents and how can one contact them?" "How are you getting home?" Some teens will resent parents keeping tabs on them, but most will generally understand it and respect it in the long term. It will generally be better received by the teen if parents are respectful and ask rather than interrogate. While parents have primary responsibility for monitoring their youth, other parents, teachers, coaches, the neighborhood, and other adults in a teen's life can be valuable resources when it comes to keeping teens safe. By developing a network with these other adults, parents are able to compare notes and develop an "early warning system" to identify any problems their teen may be experiencing.

"Kids & Guns" At Juvenile Justice Council

In recognition of Juvenile Justice Week (April 2 - 6), there will be a presentation on "Kids and Guns" at the April Lee County Juvenile Justice Council meeting. Wendy Harrison, Assistant State Attorney and Juvenile Division Supervisor with the Office of the State Attorney, will highlight the growing incidence of gun involved youth crimes in Lee County. Jeff Shicks with The Bridge youth center will discuss how music, video games, and movies influence youth violence. The council meeting is on April 5th at 1:30 p.m. at the D'Alessandro Regional Service Center, 2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165 in Fort Myers. Meetings are open to the public.

Prevention Network

A Prevention Network has been established to identify gaps in Lee County's continuum of prevention services, to expand the community's risk reduction strategies, and to enhance communication between prevention providers. The next meeting will be April 17th at 11:30 a.m. at the Juvenile Assessment Center. Anyone with an interest in youth prevention is invited. Bring a brown bag lunch. Call 344-5101 for more information.



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.