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APRIL 2017 MARKS 31st ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH



Each April since 1987, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) has sponsored Alcohol Awareness Month to increase public awareness and understanding, reduce stigma and encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues.

With this year's theme, "Connecting the Dots: Opportunities for Recovery," the month of April will be filled with local, state, and national events aimed at educating people about the prevention and treatment of alcoholism. This is particularly significant among our youth, and parents can play an important role in giving kids a better understanding of the impact that alcohol can have on their lives. Schools, churches, and other community organizations can sponsor a host of activities that create awareness and encourage individuals and families to get help for alcohol-related problems.

Alcohol and drug use by young people is extremely dangerous and is directly associated with traffic fatalities, violence, suicide, alcohol overdose, unsafe sex and other problem behaviors, even for those who may never develop a dependence or addiction. Adolescence is a time of heightened risk-taking and as alcohol and drugs enter the picture, parents are faced with a unique set of challenges. They can simply sit back and hope their kids will "get through it," or they can take an active role in helping their kids connect the dots about alcohol and drug use.

It can seem overwhelming to talk with youth about alcohol and drug use, but it is well worth the effort parents put into it. In fact, research has shown that kids who have conversations with their parents and learn about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are 50% less likely to use those substances than those who don't have such conversations. Additionally, the longer youth delay drinking and drug use, the less likely they are to develop problems associated with it.

An integral part of Alcohol Awareness Month is **Alcohol-Free Weekend** (which is officially designated March 31-April 2, 2017, but can be utilized any weekend during the month of April), is designed to raise public awareness about the use of alcohol and how it may be affecting individuals, families, and the community. During this seventy-two-hour period, NCADD extends an open invitation to all Americans, young and old, to participate in three alcohol-free days and to use this time to learn more about alcoholism and its early symptoms.

For more information about underage drinking, or Alcohol Awareness Month, visit the NCADD website at: www.ncadd.org or Substance Abuse Services for Clayton County, Inc. at www.sas4cc.com.