



Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria



SAPCA's message to youth about alcohol abuse will be making rounds on Virginia Paving's vacuum truck through June 2009.

Look for it in your neighborhood!



Signage reads: "Youth Substance Abuse: It's No Party. Prevention begins with parents. Learn about the risks and talk to your child today."

Highlights

- Executive Steering Committee formed
- Upcoming obesity prevention initiative for young children
- Addressing mental health in schools
- Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Plan
- Smoke Free Alexandria logo
- Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP)
- SAPCA's Board of Directors elected
- Letter to City Council

Our first newsletter

Hello! This is the *Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria's* first quarterly newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep our partners and the Alexandria community updated on various initiatives underway. We also hope to highlight ways that people can get more involved in these efforts.

New to the Partnership?

The *Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria* is a community coalition of non-profit organizations, schools, municipal agencies, local businesses, government and community leaders and citizens joined together to promote and preserve a healthy Alexandria community.

Executive Steering Committee formed

In November 2008, the Executive Steering Committee met for the first time. As the *Partnership* moves into its third year, the Executive Steering Committee will be taking a broad view of *Partnership* work to actively identify further community health priorities and needs not being addressed, as well as monitor and evaluate existing initiatives.

Welcome to the new committee:

Marian Van Ledingham, chair
Lisa Baker, chair of Healthy Lifestyles Work Group; Office on Women

Janet Barnett, Senior Services of Alexandria

Jerome Cordts, Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission

Ripley Forbes, Parks and Recreation Commission

Arlene Hewitt, Chamber of Commerce

Darhyl Jasper, Alexandria Citizen
Christina Johnston, chair of Healthy Lifestyles Work Group; ANHSI

Eunsung Kim, Inova Hospital

Allen Lomax, chair of SAPCA

JoAnn Maldonado, Department of Human Services

Richard Merritt, chair of Environmental Health Work Group

Lucresha Murphy, YMCA Alexandria

Mary Riley, chair of Mental Health Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign

Robin Wallin, Alexandria City Public Schools

Lisa Kaplowitz, Alexandria Health Department (AHD) [*ex-officio*]

Michael Gilmore, Community Services Board (CSB) [*ex-officio*]

Veronica Aberle, AHD [*ex-officio*]

Deborah Warren, CSB [*ex-officio*]

Our Mission

To promote a safe and healthy Alexandria through coalition building, collaborative planning and community action.

Our Work Groups

- Environmental Health Work Group
- Healthy Lifestyles Work Group
- Mental Health Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign
- Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA)

<http://www.alexhealth.org/partnership>



The Healthy Lifestyles Work Group is planning to collaborate with the Early Childhood Commission and the Arlington/Alexandria School Readiness Council to address obesity in preschool-aged children. **According to a recent INOVA Hospital survey 42.5% of Alexandria children, ages 2-5, are overweight or obese.**

The Work Group recently applied for a CDC-funded ACHIEVE grant that would provide money for action planning, training, and implementing agreed upon initiatives. We should hear news about the grant at the end of February!

SAPCA's Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Plan

The Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) recently released a report – the “Substance Abuse Prevention Plan for Alexandria” -- that paints a disturbing picture about youth substance abuse in Alexandria, with alcohol, marijuana and tobacco use by some groups of middle and high school youth **exceeding national rates.**

The report -- authored by Dr. Jerome Short and Dr. Christianna Esposito-Smythers of George Mason University -- is based on quantitative and qualitative research data collected in Alexandria.

It summarized six risk factors that characterize youth substance abuse in Alexandria:

1. High rates and early onset of substance abuse
2. Easy availability of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana
3. Lack of effective enforcement or consequences
4. Lack of effective parenting skills and parental communication with schools
5. Need for education about youth substance abuse
6. Need for more substance abuse prevention activities and practices

The report outlined a **prevention plan** with 10 recommendations to reduce youth substance use and abuse in Alexandria. For the complete “Substance Abuse Prevention Plan for Alexandria” report go to:

www.alexhealth.org/partnership/sapca.html

New ACPS Superintendent supportive of mental health issues

In November, the Mental Health Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign Work Group members met with new Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) Superintendent, Dr. Morton Sherman, to discuss the Work Group's mission and to obtain Dr. Sherman's input on addressing youth mental health issues at ACPS. Work Group members provided Dr. Sherman with mental health and substance use data from the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* administered to ACPS students in grades 7 – 12 (e.g., 30% of middle school girls have seriously considered suicide; 36% of high school girls and 20% of males report symptoms of depression). Dr. Sherman has written articles for national publications about his daughter's struggles with depression and children's mental health issues. Work Group members were pleased that Dr. Sherman stressed the importance of a comprehensive approach to addressing mental health issues and assigned a senior staff member to look into best approaches. The Work Group offered its support to any future initiatives and is doing some research into best practices.



Check out the new Smoke Free Alexandria logo! Previously called “Proud to Be Smoke Free Restaurant Program,” the Environmental Health Work Group is working with the Alexandria Health Department to reinvigorate and expand this newly named program. The program's first focus is to encourage Alexandria restaurants to voluntarily go smoke-free. So far 294 of 392 restaurants are smoke-free. Of those only 34% are full-service where customers and employees are exposed to tobacco smoke for extended periods of time.



SAPCA elected officers and its Board of Directors at a special meeting on November 18, 2008:

Allen Lomax, chair, independent consultant

Shelly Morgan, vice-chair, parent

Monique Edwards, treasurer, Sheriff's Office

Chanel Smith, secretary, student, TC Williams High School

Mary-Jane Atwater, Atwater Communications

Tricia Bassing, Community Services Board

Amy Beal, parent

Andrew T. Denison, parent

Priscilla Harp, Alexandria Court Service Unit

William Johnson, captain, Alexandria Police Department

Gregory McIntosh, student, TC Williams High School

"With our first board of directors now in place, we are ready to move forward to plan programs and activities that will reduce youth substance abuse in the City of Alexandria," said SAPCA chair Allen Lomax.

What's coming next?

- **Share Your Vision for Health.** As we begin the MAPP process -- it's important for everyone who lives, learns, works, or plays in Alexandria to get involved and VOICE what's important to them. It's YOUR health, YOUR community. During February, we are collecting surveys from as many community members as possible. Email Carrie for a survey and let us know what you think at carrie.fesperman@vdh.Virginia.gov.

Learn what others have said and help us shape our vision on Saturday March 21, 2009 at First Baptist Church, 2932 King Street. **Food provided!**

- **Save the Date!** The Mental Health Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign is working with the Alexandria Community Services Board to organize a Mental Health Month evening event on Thursday, May 21, at T.C. Williams. The show features David Granirer, a pioneer in the use of humor to increase wellness. For more information, see www.standupformentalhealth.com.

Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP)

MAPP is a strategic planning approach to community health improvement through community-wide and *community-driven* planning.

The *Partnership's* Steering Committee decided to use MAPP to guide its long-term planning process. MAPP will allow the Partnership to:

- 1) Engage additional community partners – including faith and minority communities, businesses, non-profits, and other residents – who have not been as actively engaged in the *Partnership's* initiatives
- 2) Identify community health needs that the *Partnership* should address and support current work groups' efforts
- 3) Update community data that initially drove early *Partnership* priorities.

We will be keeping the Alexandria community updated throughout this process as **there will be a LOT of opportunities to get involved!**

Letter to the Mayor and Council to support no-smoking policies

The Environmental Health Work Group brought in the New Year with a letter to the Mayor and City Council encouraging the City to more actively support smoke-free restaurants.

Here's the suggested resolution:

The Environmental Health Work Group of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria strongly encourages the City Council to establish a policy that would allow the City of Alexandria to contract only with smoke-free restaurants for the provision of food and beverages for meetings, conferences and other city-sponsored events.

Interested in getting involved?

Interested in the initiatives that we've highlighted? Willing to lend your time and expertise to any of these initiatives?

We would WELCOME your PARTICIPATION!

Contact Carrie Fesperman, Health Planner, at carrie.fesperman@vdh.Virginia.gov to learn more about getting involved.