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TODAY

SPORTS



Our local softball teams try to advance semifinals today. **B1**

As the game to lose, fire hitting pitcher, release reliever who blew game's lead. **B1**

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Child's drug use may be in plain sight

By **JESSICA MASULLI REYES**

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BYRAM — If you saw a soda can poked with holes on your teen's dresser, would you think he or she was using it to smoke marijuana? Would you realize that your teen may be doing inhalants if you saw Dust-Off in his or her backpack? And, would you think to look for heroin behind a light switch plate or sewn into the waistband of a pair of pants?

The answers to the above questions are “no” for many parents because the paraphernalia, hiding places and signs of alcohol and drug use are a mystery to them.

But, the Center for Prevention and Counseling is seeking to open up parents' eyes through a new interactive presentation where they can explore a mock teenager's bedroom and learn about the latest drug trends in Sussex County.

“Are all kids using drugs?”

Absolutely not,” said Becky Carlson, of the Center for Prevention and Counseling. “But, all kids are at risk for using drugs ... so all of us can learn something and be aware.”

The “Hidden in Plain Sight” presentation was held for the first time at Byram Intermediate School last week in connection with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Prevention Week. Additional presentations are being planned for the fall at other schools in the county.

During the presentation, parents saw firsthand everyday items that would appear to be harmless, but are actually drug-related.

For example, a weighted Dr. Pepper can may appear to just be a soda, but it could be a hollowed out stash can that is used to store drugs. Other places to hide drugs in a bedroom could be in a slit in the

hem of clothing, taped behind something or in a drop ceiling.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE NEWEST DRUG TRENDS AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Kratom

In recent years, drugs, such as K2, a synthetic marijuana, and bath salts, a designer drug, have popped up on convenience store shelves for a short time before they are banned.

Kratom — a Southeast Asian tree leaf — is the latest one to make its way to stores in Sussex County. This leaf can either be purchased in a liquid or ground form. It works as a stimulant when taken in small quantities and a sedative when taken in larger quantities.

“We are just learning about Kratom,” Carlson said. “We have to get up to speed all the time on these new drugs and

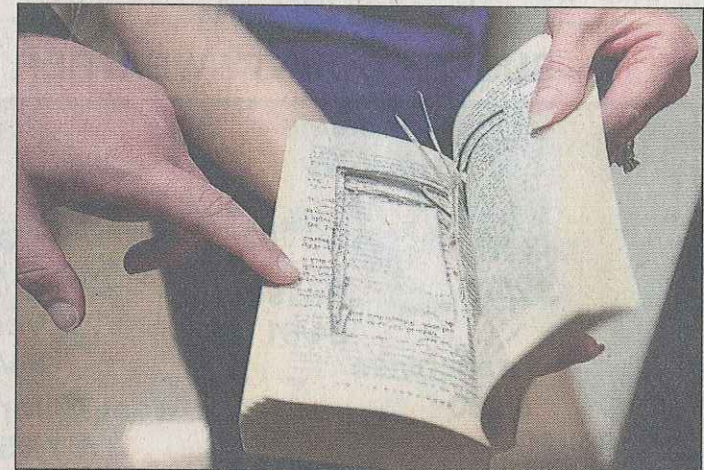


Photo by Marie Dirlc/New Jersey Herald

June Seal, of Hopatcong, opens a seemingly innocent copy of “Lord of the Rings” sitting on the bookshelf of a staged teenager's bedroom, but discovers it has been cut out as a hiding spot for an illicit substance.

these synthetic drugs.”

Parents may notice a package labeled as Kratom in a teen's bedroom or a capsule filled with what looks like tea leaves.

Syzzurp

If a parent sees cough medicine in a bedroom when a child is not sick, it could be a

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Photo by Marie Dirle/New Jersey Herald

From left, Kathy Molinari, Susan Mirz and Michael Muldoon, all of Byram, inspect drug paraphernalia sitting atop the dresser of a staged teenager's room shown as part of the Hidden in Plain Sight presentation to show parents what seemingly innocent items might actually be signs of drug abuse.

Drugs

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sign of abuse.

Dextromethorphan, sometimes called DXM, is an over-the-counter cough syrup, but recently, teens have been mixing it with fruity soda, antihistamines and Jolly Ranchers for a dangerous high, Carlson said.

Drinking games and candy alcohol

Alcohol is still the most common drug of choice for adults and teens, according to Tina Thompson, of the Center for Prevention and Counseling.

"We see many clients in the course of a week and when you talk with them and ask them what they started with, the majority say they started with alcohol and marijuana at a party," Thompson said.

With alcohol and binge drinking, comes a handful of new games beyond the usual beer pong and flip cup.

For example, neknominating is a viral drinking game where participants binge drink and then perform an outlandish stunt, which gets recorded and uploaded to YouTube. They then dare another participant to do something even more outlandish.

"Any trends you read about ... your kids hear them too, that is why you need to be up to date on it and talk to your kids about it," Carlson said. "Some parents say 'I don't want to give them the idea,' but trust me, if they are on the

Internet, if they have friends, if they ride a bus, if they see movies, they see way more than we do."

Teens are also putting candies, such as Gummy Bears and Skittles in vodka for a fruitier taste.

"It seems like every week you go on YouTube and check the news and there is a new trend of some type of candy being used with alcohol," Thompson said.

Palcohol, a powdered alcohol, has also been in the news recently, as well as smoking alcohol.

Marijuana

When looking around a teen's bedroom, a sure sign of marijuana use is pipes, rolling papers or cigars. Rolling papers are used to make joints, while cigars, which are often flavored, are used to make blunts.

"This is the telltale sign that your kid is smoking marijuana," said Byram Detective Robert Tierney.

A survey done in 2012 by the Center for Prevention and Counseling found that 15.2 percent of ninth-graders and 35.3 percent of 12th-graders reported using marijuana.

Parents may also find in a bedroom coffee grinds that are used to mask the smell of marijuana or a toilet paper roll covered with a Bounce fabric softener sheet, which can be blown into to mask the smell of smoke.

Opiates

Heroin and prescription drug abuse still remain as one of the largest problems in Sussex County and the state,

especially because of heroin's low price and high availability, Carlson said.

"All of that is making heroin explode around here," Carlson said. "Heroin use is a big problem in our county."

The same study in 2012 showed that the use of heroin rose slightly from 1 percent to 2.4 percent amongst high school seniors.

Parents may notice rubber bands, which are used to hold the folds of heroin together, syringes or wax folds in a purse or bedroom.

OTHER UPCOMING TRENDS:

E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes are electronic cigarettes that simulate smoking by producing a vapor. E-cigarettes are fairly new and at least three stores devoted to "vaping" have opened in Sussex County over the last year.

Carlson said e-cigarettes and vaporizers, a similar device, are not allowed to be used in public places where smoking is prohibited.

"If you can't smoke a cigarette, it is against the law in New Jersey to smoke an e-cigarette," she said.

Hash oil (butane honey oil)

Hash oil looks like a sticky honey and is created by using butane to extract tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, from marijuana to produce THC concentrate. THC is the chemical in marijuana that creates the high. Hash oil can be smoked or eaten.