

# Group Launches Campaign to Counter Darien's 'Troubling Rate of Teenage Binge Drinking'

By: [David Gurliacci](#) | February 2, 2017

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What does 06820 mean to you? In Darien we value education, celebrate our successes, and are compassionate in times of need. We look out for our neighbors. But there's a critical way we're falling short: 06820 is also a place with a troubling rate of teenage binge drinking.

Since 2008, we've been tracking our town's data on binge drinking — defined as four drinks in 2 hours for women, five drinks in two hours for men — and we've seen the problem intensify. In our most recent survey:

- 25.6% of our 12th graders reported having had alcohol more than 6 times in the previous 30 days.
- Only 49.1% of Darien 7-12th graders responded their parents would believe it is “very wrong” for them to consume 1-2 drinks daily. This figure is 34% lower than Connecticut towns with similar demographics, suggesting that Darien parents may be significantly more permissive about their teens using alcohol.
- Only 36.2% of Darien 7-12th graders believe a peer using alcohol daily would be at great risk

The way the kids are drinking in our town is not preparation for the adulthood we'd like them to have, physically, or emotionally. This month, we are launching a social marketing campaign to shine a spotlight on the issue, stimulate discussion, and to provide parents and teens with scientific, research-based facts related to the impact of binge drinking so they can make informed choices.

# Thriving Youth Social Marketing Campaign



NOVEMBER 2, 2017



The  
Community Fund  
of Darien

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Darienite is republishing the entire slide presentation sent to it (eventually) by the Community Fund. Any seeming typos in it may be the result of the presentation being transmitted into Keynote, a PowerPoint-like program used by Darienite.com on an Apple system. We'd spend time trying to remove the typos, but we've already spent enough time trying to get the information, and we have other things to do.

During the coming weeks, we will be disseminating disturbing images connecting binge drinking behaviors to research on the teen brain and the law. Some might find the images and information shocking, but shock in and of itself isn't our end goal:

Our town campaign is designed to point a laser focus on the hard science of how detrimental teen alcohol abuse really is, and to offer proven tactics towards healthier attitudes and behaviors.

The latest scientific research on the teenage brain, and its vulnerability to neurological damage and addiction, is both riveting and terrifying.

- Key areas of the adolescent brain are not fully formed until the mid-twenties and damage done before the mid-twenties can be irreversible.
- Teens who binge-drink do worse on learning, thinking and memory tests.
- The brain's ability to perceive pleasure is detrimentally affected by early, heavy drinking. A teen's ability to maintain a normal chemical balance — for contentment, confidence, exhilaration — are thrown off, recalibrating the brain to crave greater highs for the same sense of pleasure.
- 90% of adults with alcohol or drug addiction began using before age 18

In July 2015, Darien received a \$500,000 grant from the state of Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to address underage drinking, Darien's most prevalent substance abuse problem.



With leadership from The Community Fund of Darien, the Thriving Youth Task Force has developed a five-year strategic prevention plan designed to reduce binge drinking among teens in Darien.

In an effort to provide families with critical information, we have created a micro-website, [www.OurDarien.com](http://www.OurDarien.com), with Darien-specific data and resources to begin this important conversation in town.

We will be tracking short and long-term outcomes related to parental knowledge of the effects of alcohol on the teenage brain, the social hosting laws, adult role-modeling of a healthy relationship with alcohol, and the importance of open communication regarding family rules for alcohol.



# DARIEN EXCELS IN MANY AREAS INCLUDING UNDERAGE DRINKING RATES FOR FAIRFIELD COUNTY

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OurDarien.com is a beautiful, short, very informative "micro-website" useful for Darien teens, parents and even other adults who aren't parents. Here are some images from that website to give a taste of what it says and what it's about, but really — you should see it for yourself.

Of the campaign, Darien's First Selectman Jayme Stevenson shared, "I support Darien's Thriving Youth Task Force in its efforts to shine a spotlight on risky behaviors so parents, kids, our schools and community-at-large can begin to make healthy decision-making our highest priority and part of a new Darien culture."

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*See also:*

- [DRINKING IN DARIEN: Worse than Elsewhere for Both Teens and Adults — and the Problem is Growing](#) (Jan. 30)

We hope you will join us in support of this campaign. We are committed to turning this trend around and giving parents and teens alike the information and resources to make an informed decision about underage drinking.

Signed,

- \* Jayme Stevenson, First Selectman
- \* Darien Police Department
- \* Council of Darien School Parents
- \* Darien Chamber of Commerce
- \* Post 53
- \* Darien YMCA
- \* Darien Library
- \* Darien Youth Commission
- \* Darien Father's Forum
- \* Darien Human Services
- \* Darien Health Department
- \* Darien Arts Center
- \* The Community Fund of Darien
- \* Southfield Center for Development
- \* Kids in Crisis
- \* Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut
- \* Communities 4 Action
- \* The Center for Sexual Assault Crisis Counseling and Education
- \* YWCA of Darien/Norwalk
- \* Liberation Programs, Inc.

- \* Family Centers
- \* Silver Hill Hospital
- \* PEACH Advisors, LLC
- \* St. Luke's Episcopal Church
- \* Noroton Presbyterian Church
- \* Christ Community Church
- \* St. John Roman Catholic Church
- \* First Congregational Church of Darien
- \* DHS Youth Asset Team