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Health & Wellness solutions

NEWSLETTER FOR JOB CORPS HEALTH & WELLNESS STAFF

The Cutting EDGE: Peer Leadership at TCJCC

Trapper Creek Job Corps Center’s (TCJCC) TEAP Specialist and Acting Principal, Jesse Casterson, asked eight students, “How high can you get?,” at a recent leadership retreat in the Idaho wilderness. The group of popular, well-liked students shared personal stories about how much they have accomplished without drugs and alcohol—sobriety, high school graduation, strides in trades, better relationships. They were all truly amazed about how much they had achieved within several months of entering Job Corps. These students are members of an elite leadership group, known as EDGE, which encourages TCJCC’s student body to be all they can be without drugs and alcohol.



EDGE members and former TEAP intern Jon Burham.

EDGE is both an acronym that stands for “*Encouraging ourselves and others to be Drug and alcohol free with Group awareness of and Empathy for others,*” and a testament to the dangers of drug and alcohol use. Casterson recalls one of the founding members of EDGE referred to drug use as being “like walking the edge of a razor; it is so easy to get cut, so easy to fall from use to abuse to addiction.”

The EDGE application process is selective; only those who complete TEAP can apply and they must interview with current leaders and the TEAP Specialist. The students are in charge of selecting new EDGE members. “TEAP is a student program. EDGE is a student program,” Casterson states. “Empowering young people to take control of EDGE helps them to begin to take control of their lives.” Only a small number of those who apply are selected.

“Who you are is more than what you did.”

EDGE helps students accept their past mistakes and challenges and move forward.

EDGE members are often far from the students that one might expect to be involved in an anti-drug campaign. These students were either assigned to TEAP because of a positive drug screen or voluntarily entered TEAP. Prior to Job Corps, some EDGE members were negative leaders who were affiliated with gangs, dealt drugs, and/or engaged in criminal activity. They are magnetic young women and men and they have not always used their magnetism and charisma in positive ways. “It has always been a premise of EDGE to help young people rewrite their life stories,” adds Casterson. EDGE members wear a variety of hats. They are trained to mentor other students and to help students get assistance from counselors and other staff when

necessary. Often, they convince students with substance-abuse issues to self-refer into TEAP. EDGE leaders coordinate events on center so students have a fun, sober, activity in which to participate. Students involved in the EDGE also provide community outreach to local middle and high school students.

EDGE members play a trickier role too; they help to keep the center safe by informing staff of potential drug issues. While specific students are rarely named in EDGE members’ reports, staff members often receive an advanced warning if students plan to bring drugs on to center. As with all Job Corps students, EDGE members are apprehensive to “snitch.” Casterson addresses this issue with the group.

The Cutting EDGE (con't.)

He puts it back on himself and gives students a scenario. He asks students what he should do if his neighbor were to have a late night, destructive party, or if he suspects suspicious activity in his neighborhood. Students usually emphatically answer that Mr. Casterson, along with his fellow neighbors, should get involved to ensure the neighborhood is safe. The students then come to the conclusion that it is their job to keep the center safe, often developing the feeling that “being a ‘snitch’ is a different thing than ensuring the safety of your home.”

Over half of the students at TCJCC have completed the TEAP program, which Casterson feels is a testament to EDGE. To achieve this 50 percent mark, EDGE members encourage students to join TEAP early in their tenure at Job Corps, regardless of whether they test positive. At a new student orientation, one student leader shared his experiences with using methamphetamine, marijuana, and Oxycontin prior to entering Job Corps simply to “feel normal.” “I couldn’t get high,” he tells them. “Using made me functional, made me feel normal; and that is far from ‘normal.’ EDGE helps me get high; teaches me how to get high without using. There is no comedown, no consequences from camping, hot springing, or helping someone.”

Casterson reports, “Right now, the EDGE and TEAP programs are *juiced*. Students ask to be in TEAP. We have more applications for EDGE than we know what to do with.” He thinks the secret lies with using the students who are going to be leaders on center regardless. By helping these students use their magnetism and popularity in a positive way, these students are truly cultivating leadership skills and creating an environment where being drug free is cool. “Many of our students have used their influences and charisma to bring people into the world of drugs and alcohol. EDGE helps these students redefine themselves, helps them rewrite their stories. It can be very powerful for students to be able to influence others in a positive direction, to encourage them to be clean and sober, to show them how ‘high’ they can get.”

Not Your Mother’s Drugs: Bath Salts

– Diane Tennes, PhD, Lead TEAP Specialist

Panama City’s Sun Sentinel newspaper covered a series of bizarre stories on Martin Luther King Day 2011. First, police officers subdued a man who tore a radar unit and most of the back seat out of a police car using only his teeth. That same day, a 48-year-old woman burst into her mother’s room wielding a machete because “she was a monster.” These, and similar stories, were the impetus for Florida to become the second state in early 2011 to ban the designer drug called *bath salts*.

Contrary to the innocuous name, bath salts are not designed to smooth the skin or provide aromatherapy in the tub, but rather, they are the most recent drugs marketed to young people as a way to legally get high. The National Drug Intelligence Center uses the term “synthetic cathinone products” to define these products, which are packaged as beauty aids and household products. They are sold under a variety of names (e.g., Ivory Wave, Purple Wave, Red Dove, Blue Silk, Zoom, Bloom, Cloud Nine, Ocean Snow, White Lightning, Hurricane Charlie), and are relatively inexpensive at \$25 to \$50 per 50-milligram packet. They typically contain amphetamine-like chemicals (methylenedioxypyrovalerone, mephedrone, pyrovalerone), which are euphemistically referred to as “fake cocaine” because of the similarity of their mood-altering effects.

These drugs are commonly distributed in powder, crystal, and liquid forms but are also available in tablet and capsule forms. Individuals typically ingest, inhale, inject, smoke or snort these products. Some abusers dissolve the drugs in water or other solvents and then use atomizers. (An atomizer is a device that uses heat, pressure or vibration to convert a liquid into a vapor or aerosol mist so it can be inhaled and absorbed through the lungs). Still others apply the solutions to their mucus membranes by placing drops in their eyes or spraying the solution in their noses.

Bath salts act like stimulant drugs to create intense but unpredictable highs. Symptoms associated with bath salt use include agitation, extreme energy, paranoia, tachycardia, sweating/dry mouth, high blood pressure, hallucinations, combative behaviors, and rapid onset of



Bath salts packaged for sale.



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Not Your Mother's Drugs (con't.)

suicidal ideation which, anecdotally, seems to remain present for days or even weeks. These drugs have a high abuse and addiction liability as users report that use triggers intense cravings similar in intensity to methamphetamine cravings. The most severe symptoms seem to occur when these drugs are inhaled or used intravenously. While all bath salts are extremely dangerous, those that contain mephedrone are of particular concern as this variety presents the highest risk for overdose because of mephedrone's specific chemical composition. Poison control centers have seen an astronomical increase in calls related to bath salt use. The most recent data shows there were no calls about this substance in 2009, and in 2011 there were over 6,100 calls. The number of calls appears to have peaked in June of 2011 when 743 calls were received while in January 2012 there had been 228 calls (not all centers have reported).

Bath salts have been widely available over the Internet and at some gas stations, convenience stores, and smoke shops. These products often carried a disclaimer which said, 'Not for human consumption.' By marketing bath salts as a plant fertilizer, insect repellent, pond cleanser, or vacuum freshener, manufacturers avoided regulation which resulted in the unpredictable and sometimes life-threatening effects for users.

On October 21, 2011, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) exercised its emergency scheduling authority to control three of the synthetic stimulants (Mephedrone, 3,4 methylenedioxypyrovalerone [MDPV] and Methylone) used to make bath salts. This ban makes possessing and selling these chemicals, or the products that contain them, illegal in the United States. Currently all 50 states and the District of Columbia have either banned the sale of bath salts or have introduced legislation to do so.

Manufacturers and online retailers of bath salts and other "legal" designer drugs race to stay one step ahead of the laws passed to regulate these drugs. As ingredients are banned, drugs are reformulated to evade federal and state laws. Bath salts are still available online. Legislatures around the country are hard at work attempting to make the legislative process less cumbersome to outlaw these various formulations as well as passing "analogue" laws prohibiting these drugs with only slight variations from being sold.

Even with the variability in laws, individuals in possession of bath salts have received prison sentences. In March of this year, a Kansas man, Steven Miles Sullivan, received 7 years and 8 months for possession of bath salts and K2 with intent to distribute. A deputy stopped Sullivan in October of 2010 for a traffic violation. Sullivan admitted to having bath salts in the vehicle and said that they were not illegal. Sullivan was correct; at that time there were no state or federal laws that specifically banned bath salts, but that did not affect his arrest or his trial. According to the Journal Star, "Prosecutors said at the time of the traffic stop the bath salts violated a federal law that prohibits possessing a 'structural analogue' with intent to distribute." The jury agreed with the prosecutors and handed down a lengthy prison term.

What does this mean for Job Corps and our students? The good news is there have not been any Significant Incident Reports (SIRs) as of yet to reflect use of these substances by our students. Having education about these products better prepares staff to work with students to address issues, like illegal and illicit substance use, that may interfere with employability.

The following suggestions are offered for TEAP Specialists to ensure they are identifying students who are or may be at-risk:

- Include questions about bath salts when interviewing students when they first arrive on center.
- Incorporate education about bath salts into CPP as well as your individual and group discussions.
- Collaborate with the disciplinary system to ensure that bath salts are included as banned substances in your center operating procedures.

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Developing an Attitude of Gratitude Can Lead to Success

— Suzanne G. Martin PsyD, MPH

A positive attitude is vital for both employability and quality of life. Gratitude is an attitude that can be fostered and has been associated with measures of positive affect and well being. All the world's major religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hindu, prize gratitude as a morally beneficial emotional state that encourages kindness (McCullough & Emmons, 2006). Gratitude can help students appreciate the benefits that they receive from others. People who are grateful tend to be easier to be around and more centered. Positive energy catches on (Bono & McCullough, 2006).

Gratitude has been shown to be negatively associated with depression, anxiety, and envy while positively associated with optimism and hope. Individuals who express gratitude have also been shown to be less at risk for internalizing (e.g., depression and anxiety) and externalizing disorders (e.g. substance abuse, aggression) in a study of male and female twins. Taken together, these findings suggest that gratitude is incompatible with negative emotions and may even offer a buffer against psychiatric disorders (Bono & McCullough, 2006).

The results of a study by McCullough and Emmons (2006) suggested that daily gratitude exercises resulted in higher reported levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, optimism and energy. Additionally, the gratitude group was more likely to help others, exercise more regularly and make more progress toward personal goals. The authors also noted that gratitude encouraged a positive cycle of reciprocal kindness among people since one act of gratitude encourages another.

Research has also shown that gratitude or thankfulness can be increased as a function of interventions designed for other purposes. For example, meditation can promote gratitude as a quality of mindfulness and progressive muscle relaxation can help produce increased feelings of love and thankfulness (Bono & McCullough, 2006). Another strategy to promote gratitude is encouraging students to maintain a *gratitude journal*. Any paper journal or notebook can suffice and with access to electronic media, free journaling templates are available for personal computers and journaling applications are available for smart phones and iPads.

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News & Notes

National Violence Prevention Week will be held May 20 to 26, 2012. Each weekday focuses on a different violence-prevention topic:

- Monday, May 21—Prevention of Underage Drinking
- Tuesday, May 22—Prevention of Prescription Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Use
- Wednesday, May 23—Prevention of Alcohol Abuse
- Thursday, May 24—Suicide Prevention
- Friday, May 25—Promotion of Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Well Being

Visit SAMHSA's website to learn more: <http://blog.samhsa.gov/2012/03/07/helpcelebratepreventionweek2012/>. We challenge you to plan events for this week. Send your plans, event descriptions, and pictures to julie.luht@humanitas.com.

New Publication: Prevalence of Neisseria Gonorrhoeae Infections among Men and Women Entering the National Job Training Program - United States, 2004-2009. Cases of common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have decreased amount Job Corps students. Read the report at: <http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/display/NewsDisplay.asp?NewsNbr=58916>.

“Bully” Movie in Theaters. *Bully*, a documentary by Lee Hirsch that deals with school bullying was recently released. To download a free discussion guide to talk to students about this movie visit: <http://safeschools.facinghistory.org/>.



Seasonal Allergies (Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis): AAACHHHOOOO! (Bless You!)

Do you suffer with sneezing, runny and/or stuffy nose, itchy eyes, ears and throat just about the time that the tulips and daffodils bloom? Well, you are in good company, because 10-30 percent of adults and 40 percent of children suffer from allergic rhinitis (also commonly referred to as “hay fever”). Seasonal allergies sometimes run in families. Many people develop allergies when they are children or young adults, but allergies can start at any age. Seasonal allergies are life long, but symptoms can get better or worse over time. Common allergens include trees, grasses, weed pollens and molds as well as indoor allergens of house dust mites, pets, rodents and fungi/mold spores.

Treatment for seasonal allergies might use one or more of the following treatments to help alleviate the symptoms:

- **Nose rinses:** Rinsing out the nose with salt water cleanses the inside of the nose and gets rid of pollen in the nose. Different devices can be used to rinse the nose.
- **Steroid nose sprays:** Doctors often prescribe these sprays first because they are first-line treatment for most symptoms, but it can take days to weeks before they work. (Steroid nose sprays do not contain the same steroids that athletes take to build muscle.)
- **Antihistamines:** These medicines help stop itching, sneezing and runny nose symptoms. Some antihistamines can make people feel tired. These can be prescribed in the form of an oral medication, nasal spray, or eye drops. Many brands of the oral forms are now available over the counter.
- **Decongestants:** These medications can reduce stuffy nose symptoms, sinus pressure and congestion, and ear pain. They can be in the form of topic nasal sprays which can be bought over the counter or oral pill form. Caution should be advised in use of these medications with people with high blood pressure and those using the nasal sprays longer than three days in a row.
- **Allergy shots:** Usually allergy shots are given weekly or monthly by an allergy specialist in a few severe cases, but it can take months to work for people who choose this treatment option.

You can help prevent symptoms by avoiding the things you are allergic to. If you are unsure what you are allergic to, your doctor can perform a serum blood test or a skin test to help you figure this out.

If you happen to be allergic to pollen, you can:

- Stay inside during times of the year when you have symptoms.
- Keep car and house windows closed, and use air conditioning instead.
- Take a shower before bed to rinse pollen off the hair and skin.
- Wear a dust mask if you need to be outside.

Here’s hoping to reduce your Kleenex purchases and getting you to stop and enjoy the flowers this spring!!! If you have questions about allergies, visit the Health and Wellness Center.