

Mixed messages

Parents must pay attention to what kids are seeing, hearing

Fall River — Herald News – February 09 –Living Well- Kim Rodrigues

We've all experienced those moments when your child will simply not survive without the latest video game, toy or cell phone. Media and marketing play a major role in what kids want, do or even believe. Kids are also influenced by alcohol and cigarette advertising. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration guide "Mom, Dad, and Marketing Messages":

- Alcohol advertising contributes to an increase in underage drinking.
- Tobacco marketing more than doubles the odds that children under age 18 will use tobacco.

Pay close attention, and you'll find that alcohol and tobacco ads are everywhere. For instance, many youth look forward to watching the Super Bowl for the new commercials. According to Join Together, "The Drug-Free Action Alliance surveyed more than 8,400 youth in middle and high school to see which ads resonated the most with teens the top two ads were for Doritos followed by three ads for Anheuser-Busch alcohol products ... featuring the famous Clydesdale Horses and the one titled 'The Meeting...'

Web banners on the Internet, local convenience stores and sporting events also display ads. Think about giveaways, like a sports bag with a tobacco logo. If you think about it, our youth are constantly being exposed to media messaging.

So what's a parent to do? SAMHSA suggests:

- Be aware of how much advertising your child sees and hears. Use marketing messages to start a conversation about alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Find moments to talk with your child about marketing and media and go over your family's rules about substance use.
- Talk with your child about alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Research shows that kids who learn a lot about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use than those who do not. Yet, only 32 percent of teens report that they are getting this vital message from their parents.

By helping kids sort through messages they receive about substances, we help create a healthy community for the youth of Greater Fall River.

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