

# HORIZONS

*of Health and Hope in Montezuma and Dolores Counties*

NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2008, JANUARY 2009

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## National Debate Over Lowering the Legal Drinking Age Continues

*By Greer Galloway, HORIZONS editor*

Recent focus on college campus drinking and movements such as the “Amethyst Initiative” have rekindled a national discussion of the minimum legal drinking age. The debate is not necessarily a new one. Although some of us are too young to remember it, alcohol was banned –for all ages– in the United States during Prohibition (1920-1933). Many of us (especially those born in or shortly after 1970) likely remember that until 1984, the legal drinking age in the United States was 18. In 1984, the *21 Minimum Legal Drinking Age Law* was passed, and the legal drinking age was raised to 21.

Recently, a growing movement has been raising its voice in favor of lowering the drinking age to 18 again. The most visible advocates of lowering the drinking age are the National Youth Rights Association (NYRA) and John McCardell, former president of Middlebury College in Vermont. McCardell now heads a nonprofit organization called Choose Responsibility.

Supporters of lowering the drinking age point to the fact that an 18-year-old person is considered old enough, and presumably responsible enough, to make major decisions which require a good deal of judgment. This is most obviously illustrated in the current situation in which 18-year-old men and women are regularly in a position where they must make life-and-death decisions as members of the country’s military. 18-year-olds

are also asked to make the very important decisions required in order to exercise their voting rights.

Concern is often expressed that raising the drinking age has simply driven teen drinking underground, and many advocates of a lower drinking age look to European models, where minimum drinking ages are typically 18, 16 or non-existent. The assumption is that in these societies children grow up learning to drink alcohol responsibly, in the company of adults who are able to monitor them closely.

The 21 Minimum Legal Drinking Age (MLDA) Law has the support of organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI).

Arguments in favor of the higher drinking age include concerns about an 18-year-old’s ability to make responsible decisions regarding consumption and especially activities such as driving while under the influence of alcohol. These organizations also point to research indicating that a person’s brain is not fully developed until the early– to mid– 20s, and concern about the effects of alcohol on brain development have been shown to be valid, not only in the person consuming, but especially in the unborn baby of a pregnant woman.

MADD cites a study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration which states that the 21 MLDA Law “saves approximately 1,000 lives a year.”<sup>1</sup> According to an abstract

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***Our Youth Are Engaged In The Community***



*We listen to our community!*

# 32<sup>nd</sup> Great American Smoke Out

## Local and National Resources Help Many Quit Tobacco Use This November

*By Julia Hesse, Tobacco Education and Prevention Program  
Director, Montezuma County Public Health*

On November 20, people across the country who smoke will put down their cigarettes for the Great American Smokeout (GASO). The third Thursday of November has become a nationwide event that challenges people to stop using tobacco and raises awareness about effective ways to quit for good. The Great American Smokeout can be the first step toward quitting.

GASO was initiated by the American Cancer Society with an event in California that inspired one million people to give up tobacco for the day. People all across the country celebrate this event.

This year the Target Tobacco Coalition and Partners of Montezuma County join together to offer support for smokers and chewers who want to quit. They can find success in quitting tobacco use by preparing before the quit date by engaging the support of a sympathetic family member or friend, by attending a class, by going online, or by calling the Colorado QuitLine.

Quit stations will be set up in each town in Montezuma County and in Dove Creek in mid November. People can pick up a "quit kit" and other resources to help themselves or a loved one quit. The Montezuma County Health Department will also offer a "Quit Smart" class to help people prepare for their quit day.

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States. Approximately 4,300

Coloradoans die every year from tobacco-related illnesses. About eighty-five percent of smokers in Colorado have indicated they want to quit, but only about three percent have quit successfully on their own.

Tobacco users are encouraged to start preparing for the Great American Smokeout now by calling the Health Department at 565-3056 ext 233 or the Colorado QuitLine at 1-800-QUIT.NOW (-800-784-8669) or by visiting [www.coquitline.org](http://www.coquitline.org). The Colorado QuitLine is a FREE, telephone coaching service for Colorado residents. People can receive personalized coaching and a free supply of the patch. Support and tools include a personal quit plan; information about quit techniques used by former tobacco users; suggestions for coping with stress, cravings and weight gain; relapse prevention techniques; and scheduled calls from an experienced 'Quit Coach.

### Great American Smokeout SUPPLY STATIONS

**Pick up your Quit Kits and other resources  
at the following places:**

#### *Cortez*

Montezuma County Health Department 106 W. North St  
Partners of Montezuma County, 1104 E. Main  
Southwest Memorial Hospital 1311 N. Mildred

#### *Dolores*

KKDC D' Crow 882-4049

#### *Mancos*

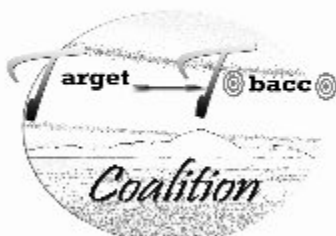
Mancos Valley Health Center 533-9125

#### *Dove Creek*

Dolores County Nursing Services and Community Clinic

*Employers are also encouraged to pick up supplies  
for their employees.*

Call Julia at 565-3056 ext 233 for more information.



*Montezuma and Dolores Counties*

# Internet Sites for Teens Can Be a Great Resource

Going online can be a great way to get information, but it is important to find sites that are reliable, reputable and safe. Teen Voices is one such resource. They publish a magazine twice a year and an online magazine monthly. **www.teenvoices.com** It is geared more for teenage and young adult women, but it would be great information for males (not to mention adults!) also. It is written and edited by teens and they are always looking for art work and writing for those looking to be published. The April 2008 edition was on health with great articles on stress. Other web sites recommended by Teen Voices regarding health are:

**www.iemily.com** "The place for girls' health."

**www.coolnurse.com** An online nurse to guide you through teen life. It has a lot of ads, but great information.

**www.youngwomenshealth.org** A colorful, easy-to-navigate site by Children's Hospital League (in Spanish too)

**www.kidshealth.org/teen** Drugs and alcohol, food and fitness: it's all here (in Spanish also)

*All sites cover information on sexuality so should be monitored for younger teens.*

## *A New Kind of Justice*

Restorative Justice is an alternative to our usual retributive justice system. Instead of a crime being seen as breaking a law or against the state it is looked at as harm done to a person and the community. It can be as complicated as a large number of people in a conference or circle to address a serious offense or as simple as the language an individual uses when talking to a child. The "victim" is very much a part of the process. Some questions to ask in a restorative process include:

Who was affected?

What is the harm that was done?

Who is responsible and how can the harm be repaired?

***Restorative Justice will be seen by the victim as adequate compensation.***

***It will require effort.***

***It does not in any way encourage repetition.***

***It is healing for all, not shaming.***

## Holiday Cheer or Holiday Fear?

If thinking about the holidays ahead conjures up stress and dread instead of joy maybe it's time to take control and make this year different.

- Have a discussion now with the whole family. What is important to keep and what new traditions might you want to start? Welcome all ideas.
- Include doing something for others. It makes the giver and the receiver feel wonderful.
- This is a good time to help children become more media savvy. Is spending money really the way to happiness and popularity?
- Plan some "down time". The best gift of all might just be some time for reflection and enjoying the peace and quiet.

Thank you to Pat McClenny, Cortez Middle School Guidance Counselor, for providing this issue's Counselors' Corner items!

# Colorado Youth Advisory Council Formation

By Greer Galloway, *HORIZONS* editor  
From the *HORIZONS* radio show September 24, 2008

Colorado is “giving our youth a voice,” according to State Representative Ellen Roberts. Twenty-four youth from southwest Colorado, including twelve students from Cortez, helped to draft a bill forming the Colorado Youth Advisory Council, which was recently passed by Governor Bill Ritter. Colorado will be one of only nine states (including Maine, Washington, Oregon, and New Mexico) whose legislatures work with an official youth advisory council on a legislative level.

During a recent *HORIZONS* radio interview, Representative Roberts said that the Advisory Council will give Colorado youth, like any other population member, a voice in the legislature. The Advisory Council will be made up of forty youth ages 14-19. Each of the thirty-five state senators will make an initial appointment, and five extra seats will be filled to ensure representation of rural youth. When vacancies occur, the council will solicit applications and fill vacancies itself with an eye toward diversity on the council.

The council will meet four times each year, twice during the state’s legislative session, and twice outside of that time. Part of the council’s responsibility will be to prepare a position paper, outlining the “official position” of Colorado’s youth on relevant issues to be presented to the state legislature each January in order to “formally advise and make recommendations to elected officials.” The members of the Youth Advisory Council are also responsible for connecting with each organized youth group in their region in order to gather information and ideas from as many youth as possible. It is a “mini-legislature in the sense that [the youth council members] will connect with their own constituent,” said Rep. Roberts.

Although the Advisory Council includes four members of the elected Colorado Legislature, they are non-voting members, and all discussion topics will be chosen by the youth themselves. Already, the youth who drafted the bill have identified a wide arrange of “issues, interests and needs effecting Colorado youth now and in the future” to be addressed, including: “education, employment, environment, health, substance abuse, driver’s license requirements, poverty, and increased youth participation in state and local government.”

Currently, members of the Youth Advisory Council are being appointed. The first meeting of the Youth Council was planned for the beginning of November in Colorado Springs. A website is being developed, and Rep. Roberts suggested that those interested search “Colorado Youth Advisory Council.” Some information is available at [www.civicmissionofschools.org/goto/Youth\\_Advisory\\_Council](http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/goto/Youth_Advisory_Council).

The formation of the advisory council is an exciting step for Colorado and youth alike. Insuring a voice for the leaders of tomorrow in the government of today is essential. As Rep. Roberts notes, “this bill is about succession planning. If our youth are going to own our governmental system and want to participate in it, they should start early.”

So, get excited, and seek out your Youth Advisory Council Member. Let your representative know what you think, and your message will be carried to the Colorado legislature!

## Minimum Drinking Age Debate

(continued from page 1)

prepared by NYRA, however, a study published in 2001 “shows that raising the drinking age had *no effect* on reducing drunk driving. In fact, its [sic] possible it created more drunk driving.”<sup>2</sup>

The National Research Council has determined that “Alcohol is the No. 1 youth drug problem in America and more young people die from alcohol-related causes than from all other illicit drugs combined.” Ultimately, choosing an optimal minimum drinking age may be a larger question than that of a few years. It involves issues of freedom, questions about when a person is “responsible” (some 60-year-olds can not make responsible decision relating to alcohol!), parental and youth rights, religion, politics, and more.

For more information on the debate over the minimum drinking age, check out these websites:

- **National Youth Rights Association**  
[www.youthrights.org](http://www.youthrights.org)
- **Choose Responsibility**  
[www.chooseresponsibility.org](http://www.chooseresponsibility.org)
- **Mothers Against Drunk Driving**  
[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)
- **Center for Science in the Public Interest**  
[www.cspinet.org/booze/mlpafact.htm](http://www.cspinet.org/booze/mlpafact.htm)

As John McCardell notes, “The time has come to address the reality of alcohol in America.” It is important that the discussion regarding the problem of alcohol consumption and addiction in this country be addressed openly and on a national level, among both youth and adults, so let the discussion begin—at your dinner table! Tonight!

<sup>1</sup> “The Impact of Minimum Drinking Age Laws on Fatal Crash Involvement: An Update of the NHTSA Analyses.” NHTSA Technical Report No. DOT HS 807 349, Washington, DC (1989)

<sup>2</sup> Dee, Thomas S, and Evans, William N. “Behavioral Policies and Teen Traffic Safety.” *American Economic Review*, 2001, 91(2), 91-97.

## Get Involved

# Video Game Addiction

## *Are Violent Video Games Harming Your Child's Brain?*

Excerpts from an article by Laura Ramirez, author of Keepers of the Children. Submitted to HORIZONS by the Montelores Early Childhood Council

As a parent, you may be concerned about the amount of violence in today's computer and video games. Some experts say that violence in video games and media adversely affects our children, while others claim that playing video games helps improve hand-eye coordination. In this article, you will learn what cutting edge research tells us about a developing brain repeatedly exposed to images of violence, so you can make an informed decision about whether to allow and/or limit violent computer and video games in your home.

Parents of teens won't be surprised to learn that the last part of the brain to develop is the prefrontal cortex which can be thought of as the brain's supervisor and is responsible for making decisions, managing urges, impulses and acting with diplomacy. The prefrontal cortex begins its development in adolescence, starting with a process called pruning which can wipe out entire neural networks in a child's brain. This is where the adage "use it or lose it" applies and explains why a child who has made reasonably sound decisions in the past may suddenly start behaving impulsively.

Couple neural pruning with blossoming (the creation of new neural networks that are formed through daily experience) and a teen video gamer's compulsive need to play violent video games and you have a recipe for disaster. Recent brain research shows that the prefrontal cortex is disengaged when exposed to violent images, while the aggression center of the brain is activated. What this means to parents of an adolescent gamer is that at the height of the development of the prefrontal cortex (the brain's supervisor and the seat of our humanity), this all-important part of the brain is repeatedly disengaged. Of course, parents should be equally disturbed to learn that while this is happening, the aggression center of the brain is lighting up like a Christmas tree. Of course this will come as no surprise to parents who have observed their children before, during and after playing violent games such as World of Warcraft (which is an internet game with over 9 million users worldwide) or Call of Duty, an Xbox game. Although it's important to have brain researchers on our side, we don't need science to prove to us that violence is junk food for a growing brain (and adult brains too.) Most of us have known this all along.

You may be surprised to learn that **video game addiction** is such a problem in some countries that these countries have established treatment centers. Video game addiction is fast becoming a problem in countries like Korea, where technology has advanced at a faster rate than in the United States. To date, Korea has forty treatment centers that are dedicated to "video game addiction." As a parent, this alone should give you pause.

For professionals who have noticed that the word "addiction" is overused in our society and understand that, by definition, an addiction requires withdrawal symptoms, you may wonder how video game play could be characterized as an addiction. After all, what are the withdrawal symptoms? According to David Walsh, PhD, author of eight books and one of our country's foremost experts on media exposure and the developing brain, the answer is in what happens in the brain. Video game play releases excess dopamine in the brain which gives the gamer a rush of feeling good (and I suspect, powerful). In order to maintain that sense of feeling on top of the world, the gamer must play continuously. Without it, the gamer experiences a "dopamine crash," and accompanying withdrawal symptoms.

### **SHOW THEM YOU CARE!**

*From 150 Ways to Show Kids You Care  
www.search-institutestore.org 887-240-7251*

*Notice them*

*Tell them their feelings are okay*

*Set boundaries that keep them safe*

*Look in their eyes when you talk to them*

*Present options when they seek your counsel*

*Notice when they're acting differently*

*Delight in their discoveries*

*Invite them over for juice*

*Forget your worries sometimes and  
concentrate only on them*

*Giggle together*

## CALENDAR

### Ongoing

#### **Fatherhood Classes**

5:30-8pm, Wednesdays

Training Annex at 105 E Arbecam, Cortez

### November

#### **4<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> Social/Emotional Relationship Enhancement**

(must commit to both classes)

6-8 pm at Trinity Preschool with Casie La Munyon. Call the Quality Improvement Team at 565-6337 to register.

#### **8<sup>th</sup> Community Celebration Habitat for Humanity**

4-6pm at First Methodist Church, Cortez  
All families are invited for food, fun, and information about Habitat. For more info, call Mitchell Toms 564-5904

#### **11<sup>th</sup> Playground Safety**

6-8 pm at Trinity Preschool  
Contact the Quality Improvement Team at 565-6337 to register.

#### **13<sup>th</sup> Ute Mountain Prevention Team Coalition**

Monthly meeting  
12:00 noon at the Counseling Center in Towaoc

#### **17<sup>th</sup> Meth Action Committee Meeting**

10:30 at Cortez Welcome Center  
**School Community Youth Coalition Meeting**  
11:15 at Cortez Welcome Center

#### **20<sup>th</sup> Thirty-Second Great American Smokeout**

## School Community Presents New Positive

By Stephanie Ogburn, SCYC

It's often easy to overlook the positive parts of our community as parents and local leaders get caught up in the fast pace of daily life and work. That's why a new media outreach campaign sponsored by the School Community Youth Coalition focuses on the many proactive actions local parents take to support their youth. Under the direction of Missy Miller, SCYC has just embarked on a brand new outreach campaign, called the "Believe It." campaign.

The new "Believe It." campaign focuses on parents and helps support them in setting boundaries for their youth around behavior and alcohol abuse. It does this by getting positive, supportive messages out to parents in Montezuma and Dolores Counties about practices most of them are already following. The messages are based on data from both parent and student surveys, data that shows that most parents and most students are taking constructive action to support healthy families and to combat drug and alcohol abuse.

Over the course of the next few months, SCYC will release nine "Believe It." messages via items like posters at area schools, community centers and doctors' offices, table tents at restaurants and radio announcements on local stations like KSJD 91.5 FM and KRTZ 98.7 FM. The "Believe It." campaign is part of a new trend in community outreach – it follows the Positive Community Norms methodology,  
*Continued on page 7*

Can You Believe?  
3 out of 4 students  
in Montezuma  
County have an  
adult in their life  
who listens to them.

**Believe It.**

www.youth4change.com

# WINTER 2008

## Youth Coalition Message Campaign

*(continued from page 6)*

a data-based, research-proven method which focuses on putting out positive messages to community members with the aim of reinforcing and encouraging more of the positive behavior, resulting in a reduction of more risky behavior overall.

So when you see a message like this:


**“Can you believe? 3 out of 4 students in Montezuma County have an adult in their life who listens to them. Believe it.”**

Or this:

**“Can you believe? 8 out of 10 parents in Montezuma County give their kids a curfew. Believe It.”**

You can know that it's not only a positive message; it's also based on real data from real parents and students in Montezuma County. Most parents are doing a great job with their kids, and the School Community Youth Coalition encourages and bolsters the hard work those parents are doing through the “Believe It.” Campaign.

The “Believe It” Campaign success is based on community members talking to each other about the messages; so, when you seen the new messages, believe it and talk about it! It is all about the conversation.



**Can You Believe?**  
Over 8 out of 10  
students in Montezuma  
County say they have a  
parent or guardian who  
expects them to follow  
the rules.

**Believe It.**

[www.youth4change.com](http://www.youth4change.com)

## CALENDAR

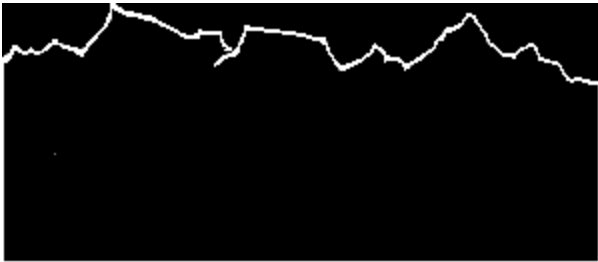
### December

- 6<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bazaar**  
**Ute Mountain Prevention Team**  
8:30-3:00 at the Ute Mountain Casino  
Bingo Hall. For more info, call Jeannie  
Watts at 570-5014.
- 15<sup>th</sup> Meth Action Committee Meeting**  
10:30 at Cortez Welcome Center  
**School Community Youth Coalition Meeting**  
11:15 at Cortez Welcome Center  
**Target Tobacco Coalition Meeting**  
12-1:30pm at Visitor's Center (Main and  
Mildred) For more info, call Julia at  
565-3056 ext. 233

### January

- 19<sup>th</sup> Meth Action Committee Meeting**  
10:30 at Cortez Welcome Center  
**School Community Youth Coalition Meeting**  
11:15 at Cortez Welcome Center  
**Target Tobacco Coalition Meeting**  
12-1:30pm at Visitor's Center (Main and  
Mildred) For more info, call Julia at  
565-3056 ext. 233
- Incredible Year Parenting Class-Dolores**  
(12- week course) For parents of children  
2-10. Dinner and childcare included.  
FREE. For more info call 564-1195 ext 45
- 25<sup>th</sup> Incredible Year Parenting Class-Cortez**  
(12- week course) For parents of children  
2-10. Dinner and childcare included.  
FREE. For more info call 564-1195 ext 45
- 27<sup>th</sup> Bridges Out of Poverty**  
(first of five-part series)  
Facilitated by Rebecca Larson  
5:45—8:45pm at Trinity Preschool  
Dinner included \$25 for entire series

**HORIZONS** is funded by state Title V funds through Montezuma County Partners and the Target Tobacco Coalition. Focused on issues related to supporting healthy lifestyle choices for the youth of Dolores and Montezuma counties, please send submissions including: calendar items, health news, ideas, and corrections to [info@scycinc.org](mailto:info@scycinc.org)



# CHARACTER CHOICES

## November

Be a person of good character through

### **GRATEFULNESS**

Let others know by my words and actions how they have benefitted my life; avoid being unthankful.

## December

Be a person of good character by having

### **GENEROSITY**

Carefully manage my resources so I can freely give to those in need; avoid being stingy.

## January

Be a person of good character by practicing

### **ORDERLINESS**

Arrange myself and my surroundings to achieve greater efficiency; avoid creating confusion.

*Provided by the Character Council*

## **HORIZONS**

Montezuma County Partners  
1104 East Main Street  
Cortez, CO. 81321

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