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News for Darien

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Letter from an Expert: Parents Should Begin Frank Discussions About Substance Abuse EARLY

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To the editor:

I applaud the work of The Community Fund of Darien's [Thriving Youth Task Force](#) as it launches its campaign "[Our Darien](#)" which is aimed at addressing teen binge drinking.

The Thriving Youth Task Force is helping to increase our understanding of teens' and parents' beliefs and behavior regarding alcohol use and binge drinking.

At the [Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut](#), where we provide mental health services to more than 3,000 children and teens every year, we are all too aware of the harmful effects of teen drinking.

The good news for parents is that research shows they are the strongest influence on their children's decisions about drinking. Our Darien's use of social media to disseminate scientific information about teen drinking issues brings it squarely into our daily lives. We urge parents to use this information as a way to begin frank discussions with their children about drinking.

People who begin using addictive substances before age 15 are seven times more likely to develop a substance use problem than those who delay first use until age 21 or older.

We know from the work of the Thriving Youth Task Force that the average age Darien children start drinking is 13.7, so there is no time like the present to talk to your children about this critical issue.

Dr. Eliot Brenner

President and CEO

Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut