

Darienite

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Letter: New Initiatives in Darien Give People, Families Support to Counter Substance Abuse

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Categories : [Community Organizations](#), [Healthy Living](#), [Parents & Kids](#)

Tagged as : [Celebrate Recovery](#), [Community Fund of Darien 2017](#), [Our Darien 2017](#), [Substance Abuse Prevention](#), [Thriving Youth 2017](#)[Thriving Youth Task Force 2017](#)

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To the editor:

As someone who grew up in Darien (DHS '93) and works for a national addiction nonprofit, I commend The Community Fund of Darien's [Thriving Youth Task Force](#) and their "[Our Darien](#)" campaign.

I think it is important that parents start the conversations with their children about drugs and alcohol much sooner than one might think (middle school is just too late) and be armed with information on how addiction is a brain disease.

There are three factors to one becoming addicted; genetic, environmental and developmental. Addiction can

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develop at any age, but research shows that the earlier in a life a person tries drugs and/or alcohol, the more likely that person is to develop addiction.

Our brains are not finished developing until our mid-20s, thus introducing drugs to the brain before this time of growth and change can cause serious, long-lasting damage.

In a town like ours, where excellence in academics is so drilled into our mindset, perhaps explaining the science of addiction to your son or daughter might delay their earlier than desired experimentation.

I also think that parents need to do their best to model healthy behavior themselves with alcohol. I so often see alcohol being marketed to moms, making it appear that moms need alcohol to get through their stress and that wine makes everything better. This is not cute or funny, but rather sends the wrong message to our children.

The Darien community, like every community around our country, has seen multiple tragedies from addiction. I am glad that The Community Fund is getting people talking with their provocative campaign.

I would also like to invite any members of the community who are struggling with addiction (of any type — i.e. food, compulsive behavior, etc.) to come out to the newly launched ministry, Celebrate Recovery, at [Noroton Presbyterian Church](#) on Monday nights at 8 p.m.

I am grateful to be an active member of the community that I grew up in and happy to be a resource for anyone struggling with addiction or who wants suggestions on how to help a friend or loved one.

Sincerely,

Holly Jespersen

Senior communications manager, [Shatterproof](#)