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School Board Pledges to Support Anti-Drug Efforts

In response to the alarming rate of substance abuse by the city's teenagers, the Falls Church City School Board passed a resolution at its regular meeting, last night, to support the substance abuse reduction efforts of the newly-formed SAFE/CADRE Task Force. The resolution also calls on the Falls Church City Council to publicly endorse the task force efforts, including active enforcement of existing underage drinking and substance abuse laws.

"This is a serious community problem," said Vice Chairman Kathy Chandler, who is the school board liaison to the task force. "It will take a sustained community effort to educate parents and students about the long-term health problems associated with teen substance abuse."

In an annual survey (PRIDE Survey) of George Mason High School 9th through 12 grade students, 131 (23.9%) indicated they use tobacco daily, weekly or monthly, 181 (32.9%) indicated they use alcohol daily, weekly or monthly and 114 indicated they use marijuana daily, weekly or monthly. Experts say the 30-day numbers are important because they indicate habitual use.

The survey indicated that many more students engage in alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use less frequently. According to the survey, students are least likely to use substances at school, where zero-tolerance expectations and consequences are made very clear, and the rules are strictly enforced. The places students are most likely to use are at a friend's house, followed by "other," in a car or at home.

Aside from the fact that it is unlawful for minors to use tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, statistics show that drugs and alcohol are leading causes of death and injury in teenagers. Research also shows that alcohol and drug use change the way the brain functions, which can adversely affect teen growth and development, causing long-term social and health problems.

School Board Chairman Craig Cheney will personally deliver a copy of the resolution to the Falls Church City Council at an upcoming council meeting.

SAFE stands for Substance Abuse Free Environment. CADRE is the Commonwealth Alliance for Drug Rehabilitation and Education.

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