

I Think My Child Is Drinking continued from page 3

Glen Cove Police Sgt. Christopher Ortiz agrees that parents and caregivers should always be proactive. Having assisted SAFE Director Sharon Harris and Georgie Connett, SAFE's board chair, in writing the Drug Free Communities Support Program and STOP ACT grant proposal which SAFE obtained, he has spent a great deal of time looking for avenues to help keep youth safe.

"I think the most important thing is to sit a child down and communicate with them, let them know your disapproval and

that there are boundaries and that they have crossed them," he said. "By simply starting to communicate you can begin the resolution of the problem. A lot of parents say their communication is combative but just stating simply that you disapprove helps. Research shows this."

SAFE, Inc. is a not-for-profit tax-exempt substance abuse education and prevention agency located in Glen Cove. For further information visit www.safeglen Cove.org or call 676-2008.

I Think My Child Is Drinking – What Should I Do?

By LAURA LANE, SAFE, Inc.

Parents and caregivers often suspect that their child is drinking. But sometimes they are not sure how to address the problem, how to communicate their concern, or how to offer their help. Research indicates that parents are the most influential factor in protecting their children from engaging in high risk behaviors, including underage drinking.

SAFE, Inc. is there to help. A prevention agency, they have remained committed to eliminating alcohol and substance abuse among Glen Cove's youth. It is the only prevention agency in Glen Cove with this mission.

"In 2004, and again in 2009, SAFE received Drug-Free Communities Support Program funds to support its coalition," says Aimee Abraham, the PRIDE Project Coalition coordinator, SAFE, Inc. "The goals and objectives of this coalition draw on a community-wide approach to change community norms, values, and policies about alcohol and substance abuse that foster consistent standards for behavior and the need for prevention."

Robin Mead, a licensed social worker and SAFE's parent and life skills coordinator, says there are physical as well as emotional signs that parents and caregivers can look for when assessing if a child is drinking.

"Emotionally they will lose ties with the immediate family and the child will not want to follow through with their everyday activities," she says. "They will lose interest in their jobs, hobbies, and in school."

Seeing this, what can a parent or caregiver do? Plenty, says Mead.

"Kids don't talk to their parents like they used to and some have their own apartments now or can stay away at a friend's house," she said. "Parents and caregivers should make an effort anyway to talk to the child openly and start the conversation with how harmful alcohol can be. And speak to them when they are sober."

Mead acknowledged that a parent's first instinct will probably be to yell, but she points out, that approach will not garner positive results.

"Parents should address the problem without being judgmental," she says. "And before they start the discussion they should do some research or call SAFE for suggestions."

Mead also suggests parents seek a professional's help either by contacting the school psychologist who can suggest therapists, or calling SAFE.

"SAFE has educational workshops we bring to the school and we have parenting workshops as well," she says. "I'm using new videos in September. We don't just talk about how to be a good parent at our parenting workshops but offer help on how to approach the problems of underage drinking and substance abuse."

Parents and caregivers can also stop by SAFE to get underage drinking preventative literature. Having this type of information may help them when speaking to their child.

"Parents need to communicate to their children that underage drinking is against the law," adds Abraham. "They need to know that using alcohol is risky and that many smart, cool people choose not to use it."

continued on page 18