

## NEIGHBORS IN THE NEWS



Courtesy SAFE

**MEMBERS OF THE SAFE** Coalition and the GCCSD met with students to listen to Dr. Stephen L. Dewey's presentation on the affects of the drugs on the adolescent brain.

### How drugs affect the adolescent brain

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition concluded their "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE Opioid Awareness Campaign" with a presentation by Stephen L. Dewey, Ph.D. on Dec. 17.

In the Glen Cove High School auditorium, Dewey, a neuroscientist, spoke about how the adolescent brain differs from the adult brain. He explained the direct effects of various drugs of abuse, specifically opioids, including legal drugs like caffeine and alcohol and stimulants like Ritalin, on brain metabolism and chemistry. He also examined how the environment influences the addictive process and how particular cues cause relapses in drug seeking behavior.

State-of-the-art medical imaging techniques used to non-invasively investigate brain chemistry was discussed compar-

ing healthy brains to those of a substance abuser. One of the most salient points mentioned was that individuals addicted to opioids are destroying the natural dopamine in their brain. Dopamine receptors give us the ability to feel. A brain of an individual who is addicted has no ability to feel pleasure and their behavior changes. The brain therefore becomes suppressed.

The pineal gland has both dopamine and serotonin. When that gets destroyed opioid abusers stop caring, making it difficult to treat them. The behavior to feel 'normal' again becomes a vicious cycle making an addict self-medicate and feel as if they need the opioid.

The evening concluded with questions and answers.