

March 2012

Two of our Substance Abuse members were able to attend a Coalition Connect seminar in Edmonton in January and were given much information to think about. One thing that stood out in their minds and memory was some shocking statistics about alcohol and its abuse.

- ✓ Albertans drink more alcohol per capita than any other Country or Nationality. This can be blamed on bad or poor modeling and peer pressure. What do our children see us doing as adults and their main model? How many parents have a liquor cabinet that gets opened when guests arrive? How often do our children make the connection between a pleasant "get-together" and the serving of a drink or two, or more? As models for our children, it was stressed that they see us and live like us, so our examples must be that of sobriety and responsibility.
- ✓ Albertans spend the highest amount on alcohol in the entire country of Canada. There are 3.7 to 4 million Albertans and last year alone there was \$2 billion of sales of alcohol. There were 340 million liters of alcohol consumed in Alberta last year. That is equal to 100 liters of alcohol per Albertan.
- ✓ The cost is not only in the price of the alcohol, but the ripple effect of the consequences. Alcohol is the highest contributing factor to motor vehicle collisions. Vehicle collisions were responsible for 783 of the 1,500 alcohol-related severe trauma hospitalizations reported in eight Canadian provinces, and when it came to drinking and driving collisions, almost a third involved Canadians under the age of 25. What's more, the likelihood that a drunk driver under 25 will die from their injuries is greater than for any other age group. Of those who died from drinking and driving crashes, 43 per cent were under the age of 25.
- ✓ Alcohol-related accidents are often more severe and result in longer hospital stays. In 2002-2003, people sustaining alcohol-related major trauma experienced an average length of stay of 14.9 days. Yet, the average length of stay in a Canadian hospital is usually just over seven days.
- ✓ One in 25 deaths across the globe can be directly attributed to alcohol consumption, according to new research from the Toronto-based Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. "These numbers are high," says Dr. Jurgen Rehm, "And they're only getting higher as more people drink in higher volumes and more frequent patterns."
- ✓ For young people, the beginning of the summer is known for celebrations surrounding graduation. As young people celebrate the end of the school year and the beginning of the summer, it is important for all of us to remember that alcohol-related injuries are often devastating, but they are also highly preventable. All current report suggests that the messages against drinking and driving aren't getting through to all youths. According to Statistics Canada, nine per cent of 16 and 17 year-olds, 18 per cent of 18 and 19 year-olds and 16 per cent of 20 to 24 year-olds say that they have driven after drinking.
- ✓ Interestingly, there were differences in provinces with different legal drinking ages. For provinces where one has to be 19 to drink, the rate for alcohol-related major injury among youth aged 18 was nine per 100,000 and remained virtually steady over the three-year period. In contrast, provinces with a drinking age of 18 showed a rate of major injury in

this group that increased steadily from 11 per 100,000 population during the first year of the study, to a rate of over 15 per 100,000 in 2002-2003.

- ✓ Alcohol is responsible for 40% of the reported spousal abuse cases in Alberta.
- ✓ Studies also find the effect of alcohol on the human body to be better understood and more easily linked to causes of death. The public doesn't always recognize an alcohol-related death. It's not like if your neighbour dies of lung cancer, and you assume he was a smoker. Nobody ever assumes that their neighbour's breast cancer was because she was a drinker. The most common disease the public associates with alcoholism- cirrhosis of the liver - constitutes a minority of alcohol-related deaths. Other side effects are neurological, psychiatric, FAS, HIV, as well as many types of Cancer, as well as mouth, and throat diseases and strokes.
- ✓ Three main causes of consuming alcohol are peer pressure, role modeling, and marketing strategies through radio, internet and TV.

CONSEQUENCES OF YOUTH DRINKING

- ✓ Young people who begin drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol problems later in life than those who wait to drink until they are 21.