



AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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The Amherst Police Department is proud to be a partner of the Race against Drug event that is being held at Cumberland North Academy this year. The event will be held on November 4th and run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Department partners with the Amherst Lions Club, the RCMP and other agencies in helping promote healthy choices. This year we will have approximately 150 grade 5 and 6 students attending from Cumberland North, Springhill and Oxford schools. The kids attending are divided into smaller groups and then will “race” to various “pit stops”. Each pit stop will have a different presenter who will talk about drugs and about making healthy choices. Every child attending will also receive a t-shirt which acknowledges that the child participated in the event. EHS, the Amherst Fire Department, Addiction Services, CN Police and other presenters will be present to speak on topics such as the dangers of high caffeinated beverages and bullying. We will also have a drug sniffing dog from the Springhill Institution to demonstrate its skills. This event has been going on successfully in our community for over 10 years. The event is all about engaging our youth about drugs and hopefully hammers home the fact that drugs can cause a lifetime of addictions.

One of the most dangerous drugs that our youth use is alcohol. Statistics show that youth who drink before age 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol dependency later in life. Binge drinking, defined as consuming more than 5 alcoholic beverages in a short amount of time, is common among young people. Studies have shown that the average age of a youth’s first alcoholic drink is also declining. People 40 or older admit that they first started consuming alcohol at age 17 while today’s youth are starting on average at age 15.

Marihuana is another drug that has adverse effects on our young people. Less of our youth view marihuana as being harmful, which has resulted in increased usage. In a survey done in the United States, only 41.7% of 13-14 year olds saw occasional marihuana drug use as harmful. This perception drops to 20.6% by the time children are in grade 12. There is no question that marihuana is harmful. Marihuana contains more of the cancer-causing chemical benzopyrene than tobacco. In some instances police are finding traces of harder drugs such as cocaine mixed in with the marihuana. In a 2009 Health Canada Sponsored Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey, Nova Scotia had the highest cannabis usage of all the Provinces, at 13.1% and was second only to British Columbia for overall drug use.

The race against drugs cannot be won through enforcement efforts alone. It is just one part of the answer. An effective drug strategy also includes education and appropriate support services. I have often heard the comment "*You'll never stop drug use.*" I agree. However, police agencies will never stop the domestic assaults, thefts, or impaired drivers, but we continue to do everything in our power, working with our community partners, to reduce the incidents to as few as possible and to make our community as safe as it can possibly be.

Change is possible. Crime rates in Canada have dropped significantly over the past several years. People are making healthier life choices, by eating healthy and exercising. Less people are smoking. These changes are occurring as a result of the efforts of community agencies, organizations, and individuals who are committed to making our world a better place. You will see many of those committed people from our community working with our youth at the Racing Against Drugs event. I am proud to be working with each and every one of them.

If you need support for yourself or someone you know to address a drug problem, support is available at Addiction Services at 667-7094. People are also urged to check out the Addiction Services website at www.addictionservices.ns.ca. This website provides a fair amount of information on the signs to look for if you fear that an adolescent is doing drugs. It also provides youth an opportunity to take a cannabis and alcohol quiz which helps dispel some of the myths surrounding these drugs.

The Amherst Police Department would like to give special thanks to the Amherst Lions Club for their continued commitment to the Race Against Drugs event year after year. Their support over the past 15 years has made this event a tremendous success.