

BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS OF THE COUNTY OF WARREN

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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

413 Second Street, Belvidere, NJ 07823



Jason J. Sarnoski, Freeholder Director
Richard D. Gardner, Deputy Freeholder Director
Edward J. Smith, Freeholder

Richard T. Burke, Prosecutor

September 15, 2016

Dear Parents:

A new school year brings both excitement and trepidation. Our children are excited about seeing their friends and experiencing new opportunities, but they may also be nervous about entering a new grade or school, and the potential rigors of a new academic year.

Unfortunately, those students in middle school and more particularly, high school, face the additional pressure of making decisions about alcohol and drug use. Although Warren County is a great place to live and is far from the typical urban areas normally associated with substance abuse, we are not immune from the problem. A recent survey of Warren County students revealed that 59.5% of twelfth grade students perceive marijuana as fairly easy or very easy to obtain. 65% of that group felt that alcohol was fairly easy or very easy to obtain. Surprisingly, even 29.3% of eighth grade students felt that alcohol was fairly easy or very easy to get.

In 2015, the Warren County Prosecutor's Office supplied each of the municipal police departments in Warren County with Narcan to be utilized by patrol officers as first responders to a suspected heroin overdose victim. Although there were more than forty Narcan deployments in Warren County from January to the end of July 2016, which saved many lives, there were four deaths attributed to drug overdose during the same time period.

Over the last two years, the Warren County Prosecutor's Office has partnered with the County of Warren (through the Warren County Department of Human Services), The Coalition of Healthy and Safe Communities (a program of the Family Guidance Center of Warren County), municipal alliances, school officials, medical professionals, and other volunteers in a coordinated effort to address drug prevention, education and rehabilitation in Warren County. The process is ongoing and we are making great strides. However, this process is not enough.

Today, we are asking each and every parent to join the fight to keep our kids healthy, happy and safe. We know that your busy lives do not leave much spare time, so we are not asking you to join a committee or spend time handing out flyers. Instead we are asking that you pay attention to and become involved in the daily lives and activities of your children. Talk to them about their day, get to know their friends (and their friends' parents), know where they are going and when they are coming home, talk with their teachers and coaches, volunteer for school activities if you are able and just listen to what they have to say. The most important thing is that you know what is going on with them each day and let them know you care. It will go a long way in keeping them safe.

Please accept our best wishes for a healthy and productive school year.

Very truly yours,



RICHARD T. BURKE
Warren County Prosecutor



EDWARD J. SMITH
Warren County Freeholder