

RED RIBBON WEEK



Students at Sand Lake Elementary hold up a check for \$500 presented to the school student council from the Red Ribbon Coalition to help continue drug prevention efforts at the school.

Red Ribbon week kicked off Monday, Oct. 22, 2007 at Sand Lake Elementary School in Anchorage.

This year, Alaska Red Ribbon Coalition will help spread the message, "It's time for all of Alaska to be 100% Me Drugfree!"

The Alaska Red Ribbon Coalition will distribute more than 150,000 Red Ribbons statewide to help raise awareness of the drug and alcohol problems that plague today's youth during the week of Oct. 22-26.

Alaska joins other communities around the nation to raise awareness about alcohol abuse, tobacco use and drug abuse. The Alaska Red Ribbon Coalition encourages youth to find alternative activities to drug and alcohol use while making healthy choices for their future.

The Sand Lake Elementary Student Council received a check for \$500 signed by Alaska Red Ribbon Coalition co-chairs Alaska State Trooper Col. Audie Holloway, Anchorage Police Chief Rob Huen, Anchorage School District Superintendent Carol Comeau, U.S. Attorney Nelson Cohen and DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge Harvey Goehring. The money is for continued drug prevention efforts at the school.

Nationally, Red Ribbon Week is celebrated each year during the last week in October. Congress established Red Ribbon Week in 1988 to commemorate the life and work of Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, a Drug Enforcement Administration



agent who was murdered in the line of duty in 1985. Believing that one person can make a difference in the fight against drugs and to honor his memory, Camarena's family began to wear red satin badges.

Parents wanting to end the destruction alcohol and other drugs had on their children and families began to form coalitions. Many of these coalitions adopted Camarena as their model and embraced his beliefs and the symbol of his memory, the red ribbon.

The National Family Partnership organized the first Nation-wide Red Ribbon Campaign in 1988, thus beginning Red Ribbon Week which has influenced millions of American children.

Randi Binion-Olson, Prevention Coordinator for Alaska Red Ribbon Coalition, said the coalition's goal this year is to get people to talk to youth about the health risk of using alcohol, tobacco and drugs and the benefits of not using them.

According to the 2005 Anchorage Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- 75.8% of Anchorage youth have ever tried alcohol
- 27.9% of Anchorage youth have participated in binge drinking
- 44.9% of Anchorage youth have tried marijuana
- 22.7% of Anchorage you have tried marijuana in the last 30 days

For more information on other activities during Red Ribbon Week, please contact Binion-Olson, at 333-2582.

Here's what we can do as caring adults to help keep kids across Alaska "100% Me Drugfree!":

- Start talking to children in your life early on about the dangers of drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse. Create an open environment to discuss these topics by frequently communicating family values. Be honest and patient with children during these talks by letting them tell you about what is going on in their lives. Every day hold opportunities to talk; it is important to have these discussions again and again to get the message across of "100% ME Drugfree!"
- The more that you know about your child the easier it will be to guide them toward more positive, skill-building activities and friendships, so ask questions. Practice active listening by paraphrasing what your child tells you, this way you are both on the same page. Children are less likely to experiment with alcohol and other drugs if caring adults are apart of their lives.
- Spend time with the children in your life by having play time together and doing something special together once a week. Make sure to praise children for activities you ordinarily take for granted, such as setting the table or doing homework. Your opinion matters even if you have tweens and/or teens.
- Don't under estimate the power of having dinner together as a family. The results of *The 2006 Importance of Family Dinners III* study done by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University are staggering! According to the survey teens who have two or fewer family dinners per week (compared to teens who have five or more family meals per week) are more than twice as likely to have tried cigarettes; one and a half times more likely to have tried alcohol; twice as likely to have tried marijuana; and more than twice as likely to say future drug use is very or somewhat likely. Having regular family meals is one of the most effective steps adults can take to stop drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse before it starts.
- Make clear, consistent, enforceable rules for your children. Setting boundaries and following through with consequences is the easiest way to let your children know that you are serious when it comes to alcohol and other drugs.
- Know your child's whereabouts at all times and get to know your child's friends. Knowing where your child is going, who they will be with and what they will be doing will make it difficult for your child to sneak around and try drugs and alcohol. Establishing relationships with your child's friends will put you in touch with their daily lives.
- Get to know the parents of your child's friends. This will help you create common ground rules and consequences. It will also make it easier for you to follow through if you have the support of other parents who feel the same way you do.



ALASKA CAN BE
DRUG FREE

RED RIBBON
COALITION