December 2014 – LIVE REAL Mentor Listerv Email

Season’s greetings LIVE REAL Mentors!

It’s December already and this semester has flown by! The year will soon come to a close and I hope you are all preparing to celebrate the holiday season filled with delicious food, friends, family, and preparation for 2015! While the holidays provide us an opportunity to be with those important to us, for some this also is a high-risk time for alcohol abuse. In Understanding the High Functioning Alcoholic: Breaking the Cycle and Finding Hope, author Sarah Allen Benton states, “During the holidays, even those without alcohol problems may find that they are drinking more than they have the rest of the year.” In fact, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism’s (NIAAA) Task Force on College Drinking recognizes a significant increase in consumption of alcohol during end-of-the-year holidays. This provides us an opportunity as LIVE REAL Mentors to reinforce positive messages about alcohol and low-risk behaviors. Keep the following facts and tips in mind this holiday season, and share them with friends, family, and colleagues:

- **Alcohol-related accidents increase over the holiday season.** Rates of driving while intoxicated increase over the holiday season, and rates of alcohol-related traffic crashes significantly increase over New Year’s Eve and other mid-week winter evenings. Plan ahead and know the facts about alcohol to ensure a fun, safe, and Happy New Year!
- **The effects of alcohol do not stop when drinking does.** Even after a person stops drinking, alcohol can continue to enter the bloodstream from the stomach and intestine. A person’s BAC can continue rising and the effects of alcohol will continue long after, as well.
- **Only time can sober a person up.** Everyone sobers up at approximately the same rate (0.015% reduction in BAC per hour). Eating a loaf of bread, drinking a cup of coffee, or taking a cold shower will not counteract the effects that alcohol has on the body – even if it makes an individual feel less intoxicated.
- **Alcohol impacts driving ability, even before the physical signs of intoxication are present.** Driving-related skills such as fine motor skills, response time, and decision-making abilities are impacted long before a person may show obvious signs of being intoxicated. Icy roads and travel conditions further increase the risk of driving after the consumption of alcohol.
- **Remember that alcohol is a complement, not the purpose.** Being surrounded by friends and families at a holiday celebration often provides individuals with an opportunity to drink socially. Know that drinking does not always have to be an option: it is both a choice and a responsibility.

What can you do as a LIVE REAL Mentor this holiday season?

- **Talk honestly about alcohol and its effects.** Though it may sound strange, reinforcing messages about standard drink sizes or what mixing alcohol and caffeine does to the body can be interesting conversation topics at those awkward holiday parties. *Did you know that a long island iced tea has about 4 standard drinks?*
• **Share tips for stress reduction that don’t involve alcohol consumption.** While this is “the most wonderful time of the year”, it can also be very stressful. This stress can contribute to increased drinking around the holiday season, which may lead to high-risk behaviors. Suggest alternate stress-reduction activities instead, like sledding or building a snowman, to really enjoy the winter season!

• **Help your friends and family make a plan to consume safely.** Use the BAC Calculator at [http://www.ndsu.edu/alcoholinfo/measure_your_drinking/](http://www.ndsu.edu/alcoholinfo/measure_your_drinking/) to help those close to you determine how to maintain a BAC of .05 or lower. If you are traveling or going out for the holidays, there is also an app for your smartphone that can help you manage your BAC. Download *What’s Your Buzz* at the iTunes app store or Google Play store for free!

• **Other tips to share:**
  - If you plan to drink, choose the number of standard drinks you will have ahead of time.
  - Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks throughout the evening.
  - Select a designated driver who won’t be drinking at all that night.
  - If you are the designated driver, please help ensure all of your passengers get home and inside safely.

Thank you for all that you do as LIVE REAL Mentors and for reinforcing positive messages of prevention throughout NDSU’s campus and the Fargo-Moorhead community. Have a safe, fun, and happy holiday season!

**Spring 2015 LIVE REAL Mentor Sessions:**

**LIVE REAL Mentor Parent and Caring Adult Session:** Wednesday, January 28th, Noon (Room of Nations)

**LIVE REAL Mentor: The Basics Session:** Tuesday, February 24th, Noon (Meadow Lark Room)

**LIVE REAL Mentor Marijuana Session:** Thursday, March 26th at Noon (Meadow Lark Room)

**LIVE REAL Mentor Advanced Session:** Wednesday, April 8th, 9:00 am – Noon (Peace Garden Room) RSVP to Chris Held ([Christopher.Held@ndsu.edu](mailto:Christopher.Held@ndsu.edu)) by April 3rd

**LIVE REAL Mentor: Alcohol and Sexual Violence Session:** Wednesday, April 15th, Noon (Arikara Room)