

What can teens do BESIDES drink on the weekends in Lawrence? My son tells me that drinking is the only thing to do and everyone else is doing it!

A great question, and one posed by parents and teens alike!

Whenever our senior high YADA team (Youth Against Drugs and Alcohol) asks junior high students to brainstorm the answer to this question, they continually receive dozens of ideas that they have never received before. From classroom to classroom, students demonstrate their amazing creativity. Some YADA team members have made it a goal to experience every one of the activities on their own personal lists at least once before they graduate.

YADA has successfully challenged the idea that there is nothing else to do but drink. It is, however, so important for students to

- 1) Have the courage to suggest alternate activities and
- 2) Have at least one friend who respects them enough to consider their ideas for alternate entertainment.

YADA team members have emphasized that once two friend's start doing these other activities and talking about them in an open and enthusiastic manner to others that they will begin to draw them in, one at a time. There will always be friends that simply are so enmeshed in the drinking culture that they will not risk an evening of sobriety. But there are others who are simply there because they want to have fun and need the leadership of some positive risk-taking students to try something different.

Parents can support teens in alternate activities by making their homes available with supervision, offering to help out as requested by teens and frequently making comments that affirm creativity and intelligence. Most importantly, parents can role-model that they, too, can have fun with friends in ways besides drinking. Hey, Parents! How about a board game tournament with YOUR friends!

Here are some ideas from both age groups:

- *Have a song-writing evening , one group works on lyrics and one on melody, then put it together making the lyrics squeeze into the melody and record it*
- *Have long drawn-out conversations with friends that last late into the night*
- *Have a contest making cardboard box houses...the biggest, the smallest, the prettiest, the ugliest, etc*
- *Take random T-bus rides*
- *Have a night with your friends where you ONLY talk in funny voices*
- *Have a scavenger hunt around town; either two friends or parents can organize it/plant items for the rest of the group/ drive the group around*
- *Have board game tournaments*
- *Have movie marathons-some high school student's start Friday night and do this for 24-36 hours at one student's home!*
- *Go roller-blading*
- *Make "YOUtube" videos or movies with friends*
- *Have dance parties/contests with friends*
- *Spend one evening brainstorming a new sport, developing all the rules, etc., then announce it to your friends, get teams and play it on another evening or afternoon*
- *Take random "Dora trips" (just exploring/hanging out) with your friends*
- *Carve watermelons like you would pumpkins and then eat them*
- *Plan a bike trip all around the city limits of Lawrence—27 miles, according to those who have done it!*
- *Find out where all the city trails are and hike every one of them*
- *Make dinner at each other's houses*
- *Dance on/take pictures on hay bales*
- *Play guitar hero/ Wii games*
- *Go shopping for one item, like the funniest hat you can find*
- *Play hide and seek/flashlight tag*
- *Have funny-themed non-alcoholic parties where everyone dresses like their favorite super-hero*