

## **2019 RED RIBBON CAMPAIGN ESSAY CONTEST**

Drugs. Alcohol. Peer pressure. Social media. These are all topics that can be related in some way. This way is the abuse of alcohol and drugs for everyone but especially underage people. I believe that as a community we will continue to encourage and associate the idea of being drug-free to being happy.

Drugs. Drugs have been a serious topic of discussion throughout New Jersey recently. Especially the first death in New Jersey that was related to vaping. Although this person was an adult it still exemplifies the fact that someone could die because of drugs. The range of people who have lung related illness starts at the age of 15, which is completely insane but sadly understandable. Only because the fact when most people turn 15 they are in their first year of highschool. Highschool can be very stressful to many and teens might just resort to drugs, which is a very deplorable fact. Especially with social media people "advertise" drugs as a cool thing which can make you want to try it, which is not the right message to be sending online. Also teens have to remember the fact that drugs will not keep you calm or happy for that long. You will just feel worse once the drug wears off, you will be happier if you don't take drugs at all. People also think that if you take certain drugs it will make you smarter or a faster learner which is false. A Princeton Professor, Dr. Joe Z. Tsien once said, "If you look at how people improve their brain power, it's through education. That has proven to have 100 percent efficiency with minimal side effects,". This quote is absolutely correct, and should be an example to others.

Alcohol. Alcohol is a very important discussion as well, with more than 4,700 underage people dying from drinking alcohol. Everyone has seen the movies where college kids who are in their freshman year go to parties and start drinking alcohol. This is a problem

because these people are underage, most likely the age of 18 which is illegal. This could get you hefty fines and even jail time in the state of New Jersey. Since our brains are not fully developed until we are about 25 years old drinking can distort parts of your brain even more than adults. The amygdala which tells our body when we might be in danger would be masked when you are drunk which is extremely harmful to yourself and others. A lot of people use peer pressure to make you drink even if you don't want to. But you should never give in to peer pressure because then they win, not you. Alcohol might make you feel happy when you start but afterwards you will feel terrible you will be throwing up if you drank a little too much and could possibly have a hangover which nobody wants. Overall it will not make you happy but the exact opposite.

If you use drugs you will not get smarter, be a faster learner, or overall be calm or happy for an extensive period of time. If you don't use drugs or alcohol you will be your best, healthiest, and happiest self.

#### Sources:

1. <https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/tobacco/vaping/>
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/11/science/can-drugs-make-us-happier-smarter.html>
3. 7th grade Alcohol Awareness Health Notes