

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month. On average 88,000 people die a year from alcohol related causes, making it the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States. According to the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) that 9th-12th grade students in 2015, 51% of teenagers have had a sip of alcohol before the age of 18. Alcohol use at a young age is dangerous. Teen brains are at a very fragile stage of development including lack of judgement and likelihood of addiction. Other problems can be associated with underage drinking like drunk driving, unprotected sex, academic failure, and experimenting with other drugs. Many adults believe that underage drinking is a rite of passage and inevitable, “they are going to do it anyway.” To counter these messages we need to talk about this—with each other and with our kids. Share what you know about the dangers of drinking while praising and encouraging our friends, neighbors and youth to make healthy responsible choices. Youth who start drinking before the age of 17 are five times more likely to become alcoholics as adults. It is never too early for prevention and awareness. Parents, guardians, and others who care for our youth, take an opportunity to talk to them about the dangers of alcohol.

Allie Burke
Program Manager
River Valley Rising