New College Campaign Makes Rx Abuse a Hard Pill to Swallow

Program shares life-saving information, so students stop sharing medication.

College students across the nation are risking their lives by taking medication not prescribed for them, in misguided attempts to combat academic pressures. On average, someone in the U.S. dies from a drug overdose about every 15 minutes. In fact, prescription drug abuse accounts for the majority of drug overdoses in Georgia.

Tackling this devastating health crisis is challenging because pills are not seen as “street drugs.” These easy-to-access medications are far too often perceived as clean and safe.

“Prescription drugs have become commonly used in a cavalier manner. When taken as prescribed, they can be helpful. It’s when pills are misused or abused that they become dangerous,” Program Coordinator Ashley Sequens said. “Students are receptive to our prevention message because they recognize it as a problem among their peers.”

Despite the rate of abuse and hard-to-break lifestyle choices of young adults, The Georgia Prevention Project takes a firm stand to educate college students about the dangers of prescription drug misuse and abuse. Last fall, the Georgia Rx Abuse Project launched across college campuses.

This campaign confronts the hidden abuse of prescription drugs among college students. In particular, the program focuses heavily on the abuse of Adderall and Ritalin—the two most commonly abused drugs on college campuses. The misconception is that these drugs will improve academic performance.

“College students have a lot of pressure placed on them from all angles...So, for some people the answer is prescription medicine,” said a Kennesaw State University senior, Kesha Adams. “This issue usually doesn’t get as much attention on campus as drunk driving or cancer. Prescription medication in the wrong hands can cause fatal consequences, and more awareness can save someone’s life.”

Recently, the Georgia Rx Abuse Project launched on the campuses of Gordon State College, Kennesaw State University and Emory University. By the fall of 2015, we will add programs on the campuses of Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University, University of Georgia, Georgia Tech and University of West Georgia.
CEO of Partnership Steps Aside

Starting as a volunteer 24 years ago, CEO Steve Pasierb of the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids stepped down from the organization on March 31. Marcia Lee Taylor has stepped forward to serve as interim President and CEO.

“I’ll always be a friend and supporter of the Partnership’s life-changing and life-saving work,” said Steve Pasierb, who will continue to serve as an advisor to the Board of Directors for the next several months.

The Georgia Prevention Project is an affiliate of the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, the oldest and largest nonprofit organization that focuses on drug abuse prevention.

Community Pilot Program to Launch in Pickens County

The Georgia Prevention Project is excited to launch a new substance abuse prevention initiative—the Community Prevention Partnership (CPP). The objective of the CPP is to build local coalitions to prevent substance abuse in Georgia communities. The pilot of the new program will launch first in Pickens County and then spread to other outlying areas.

The goal is to target counties that have prevalent substance abuse problems—especially meth and prescription drugs. The Georgia Prevention Project will work with communities to create a customized program, packaged with on-site training, continued mentoring support and access to resources.

“The objective for the first year is to begin reaching into local communities by starting with three counties,” said Director of Programs Latrina Patrick. “We will work hand in-hand to get the citizens in those areas involved and on track for success.”

Upon completion of this process, these coalitions will become community-focused extensions of the Georgia Prevention Project. The project’s proven track record of success with implementing community programs will add credibility to these partnerships.

Georgia Prevention Project Attends National Rx Drug Abuse Summit

Director of Programs Latrina Patrick and Program Coordinator Ashley Sequens were proud to represent the Georgia Prevention Project at the 4th Annual National Rx Drug Abuse Summit, which was held in Atlanta, April 6-9.

The gathering is the largest national collaboration of clinicians, treatment providers, counselors, educators, advocates and leaders from local, state and federal agencies impacted by prescription drug abuse.

In March, more than 1,200 students at Pickens High School heard our lesson about the dangers of meth use and prescription drug abuse.
Georgia Prevention Project Reveals 5-Year Strategic Plan

This spring, our dedicated team marked five years since starting the Georgia Meth Project. At the 2014 National Rx Drug Abuse Summit, held this time last year, our tireless campaign announced an increased scope and name change to the Georgia Prevention Project.

Our hard work and extremely encouraging results has only gained momentum. To move forward with a clear direction for the future of the Georgia Prevention Project, our board of directors recently crafted a 5-Year Strategic Plan to share with all of our supporters.

“Over the next three to five years, we intend to take the basic success factors of the Georgia Meth Project into the fight against the abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications,” explains Executive Director Jim Langford.

“We have learned some valuable insights on how to communicate dangers to teens and young adults, and we plan to use those techniques and messages in new campaigns, such as the Rx Abuse Program,” he added.

Georgia Prevention Project Welcomes Two New Board Members

As Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Balentine investment counseling firm, Robert Balentine is a valuable addition to the Georgia Prevention Project.

Robert began his career with Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, where at the age of 28, he was elected the youngest vice president in Merrill Lynch history. In 1987, he and his father co-founded Balentine & Company, which grew to become the largest privately owned investment counseling firm in the Southeast.

An Eagle Scout, Robert was named by the Boy Scouts of America as the 2012 Atlanta Eagle Scout Centennial Class Honoree. Robert has held a variety of leadership positions in the community. He was Chairman of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Vice Chairman of the Woodruff Arts Center and Chairman of the Salvation Army Atlanta Boys & Girls Clubs.

A graduate of Washington and Lee University, Robert served on the University’s Board of Trustees for nearly a decade. In 2013, he received the Business Person of the Year Lifetime Achievement award from the Metro Atlanta Chamber and was named a “Notable Georgian” by Georgia Trend in 2015.

In his role as a member of the Georgia Prevention Project Board of Directors, Tom Lape brings many years of senior-management business experience to the organization.

As President of Mohawk Industries’ North American (NA) Residential Business, Tom oversees all aspects of the company’s residential business, including a wide variety of flooring products marketed under the various Mohawk brands.

An industry veteran of 30 years, Tom has served in a variety of capacities, all related to the flooring industry. Headquartered in Calhoun, Georgia, Mohawk is a global leader in the supply of flooring products for both residential and commercial applications.

A graduate of Duke University, Tom earned degrees in Economics and Finance while also earning the John Ryan Memorial Scholarship for his leadership as a scholar athlete. He was a four-year letterman and captain of the golf team in 1986.
A Look Back at Where Our Fight Against Meth Began

For more than a year, the Georgia Prevention Project has led a statewide drug-prevention program aimed at reducing the use of dangerous drugs among teens and young adults. The ability to continuously add to our program offerings and expand our community outreach is built on the strong foundation of the Georgia Meth Project.

As we look to future gains our organization will make by leveraging new strategies and tactics targeting teens, parents, school systems and communities, the Georgia Prevention Project celebrates advances and achievements to date.

In 2009, the Georgia Meth Project became a 501(c) (3) organization and successfully formed relationships with business leaders, educators and other nonprofit organizations. In its first four years of operation, the Georgia Meth Project raised more than $18 million in private donations and in-kind contributions.

In 2010, a targeted campaign kicked off with 23,000 primetime television ads, 26,000 radio spots and 600 billboards placed in Georgia. The powerful message emphasized that meth is not a drug anyone should experiment with—“Not Even Once.”

To see the shocking physical and emotional pain inflicted on those addicted and their families, as well as Georgia Prevention Project’s impact on the state since the initial launch, watch our latest Georgia Meth Project commercial.

Scan this QR Code with a mobile device and enter GMP as the password to view the video.