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Scoring without Supplements



THE HERBAL STIMULANT EPHEDRA MAY HAVE BEEN BANNED AT THE OLYMPICS, but some young athletes

in middle school and high school are still using that and other "performance-enhancing" substances unchecked, according to medical experts.

These substances have been known to cause seizures, strokes, heart attacks and kidney problems, yet require neither a doctor's prescription nor a parent's permission to be purchased over the counter.

Concerned about the use of these "sports supplements" as well as steroids, alcohol and other drugs among school-age athletes, a group of San Diego County prevention providers and school officials is in the process of forming a youth sports wellness committee to deal with the problem.

The goal of the yet unnamed group is to decrease substance use among young athletes by creating a coordinated, comprehensive system to develop model policies and guidelines for relevant private organizations, public agencies and parents in San Diego County. That system would create a level playing field for young athletes and mobilize students, parents, community sports organizations, and local schools to prevent problems with athlete drug use.

Jerry Sherk, a former defensive tackle for the Cleveland Browns who has headed the sports group at the San Diego County Substance-Abuse Summit for the past three years, is one of the leaders of the new task force. He said he hopes to address everything from supplement popping before athletic events to partying afterwards.

"A lot of this is about the so-called performance-enhancing supplements that kids can buy over the counter at Vons," Sherk said. "We're also concerned about reports we hear about steroids coming up from Mexico. And then there's



Jerry Sherk

after the game—we don't want them drinking and getting into trouble."

Sherk said that part of the concern stems from the fact that while the use of supplements and drugs may be a hot topic at the Olympics, it gets little open discussion on the middle school and high school level.

"School teachers, coaches and administrators are walking on a minefield," Sherk said. "Whenever this comes up, whenever you even begin to accuse a kid, lawsuits start flying in all directions."

That may change soon. Worried that student athletes may be putting their developing bodies at risk, California State Sen. Jackie Speier, D-San Mateo, has introduced legislation restrict-

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ing the sale of ephedra-based dietary supplements to minors in California. The bill, SB 397, is currently undergoing review.

Speier told a Senate hearing in January that she was frustrated that the National Football League and the National Collegiate Athletic Association as well as the International Olympic Committee had barred the use of ephedra-like substances, but there were no similar restrictions in middle and high schools.

Speier said that, at the very least, the state needed to look at health risks. "This has a serious impact on our young people's future," she said. "Not just whether they'll get a football scholarship but whether they'll be able to have kids in 10 years."

Ephedra is believed to be nearly as potent as amphetamines and has been linked to more than 80 deaths nationwide, but it has become one of the supplements of choice among teen athletes feeling the pressure to perform. Other supplements have received a big boost from sports celebrities, such as baseball slugger Mark McGwire, who has said he excelled while taking such products.

A national survey by Blue Cross and Blue Shield showed that an estimated one million youths, ages 12 to 17, have taken supplements. Twenty percent of the teens polled said they knew someone taking supplements.

"It's not a matter of 'Are you taking?' It's, 'Hey, what are you taking? And where can I get it?'" Greg Davis, 19, the former captain of the varsity football team at Danville's San Ramon Valley High School, told the Senate hearing in January. Davis testified that he suffered two seizures after taking four so-called performance-enhancing products in 1999 and 2000 but that his medical problems ended once he stopped taking the products.

Sherk said that adults and schools exacerbate the problem because there is such a great focus on winning. They may look the other way about supplement using because they don't want to hurt their chances of coming out on top.

"For a coach, a losing season can sometimes mean you don't have a job," Sherk said. "That can make winning pretty important."

As one of its first steps, the San Diego task force is collecting data on school drug policies around the county.

"Every school has a drug policy, and it is usually very clearly spelled out what can be taken and what can't," Sherk said. But while those policies often cover amphetamines and steroids, they neglect sports supplements. That can be a problem, as can the fact that, even when they have clearly spelled out policies, some schools do not have a regular testing program.

The task force would like to see consistent, comprehensive policies, strategies and enforcement. Sherk said that the purpose of such a system would be three-fold:

- to provide a community-wide system to deal proactively with this issue
- to provide a nonpolitical, neutral process for reporting and referrals that can be accessed by students, parents or the sports/school community
- to provide information, training, treatment referrals and assistance with policy development for the school and youth sports community

The task force is striving to make the system a broad-based group with representation not only from the schools and prevention providers, but from law enforcement, the PTA and other parent organizations, medical and health organizations, local businesses, coaches and the California Interscholastic Federation.

"We don't want to be the police, but we want to gather information and influence policy," Sherk said.

Sherk said that he has seen results from such actions at the NFL level. He said that steroid use has decreased among professional football players, due to regular drug testing and offering the players other options for enhancing their performance.

"They are teaching them how nutrition and weight training can make a difference," Sherk said. "They are giving them options."

Sherk said that those options should be available from Pop Warner and Little League on up. Coaches need to be trained to provide those options, he said.

"One of the things I saw in the NFL is that you have to do so much to get the edge," he said. "My roommate was taking steroids and human growth hormone, and he eventually got a brain tumor and died."

"We need more balance. It's very difficult to tell these young warriors not to do this. They want the edge. We've got to give them and the administrators some tools." □

For additional information, call Jerry Sherk at 760/633-1807.



VITALITY SAN DIEGO

Scores High



PREVENTION PROVIDERS ARE USING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW STADIUM in downtown San Diego to score a home run in terms of proactive community development.

The construction of a new major-league ballpark in downtown San Diego could have caused a lot of angst among local prevention providers, but instead they chose to see it as an opportunity.

Rather than waiting to see what problems might evolve from the sale of alcohol at the park and in the surrounding neighborhood, they chose to have a positive influence on the project from the ground up—well before any alcohol was sold.

“We decided to tie prevention work to community development,” said Rob Adsit, a senior preventionist with the Institute for Public Strategies. “We want to be proactive so the police, the fire department and ambulance drivers don’t have to be reactive.”

The new stadium will host concerts and other large gatherings as well as Padres baseball games. In addition, the surrounding neighborhood, known as the East Village, is being redeveloped for residential and commercial use, opening up the possibility for a number of new alcohol outlets.

“The people who move to the East Village are obviously going to want the hubbub of living near a major ballpark,” Adsit said. “But I don’t think they’re going to want drunks rambling through

their neighborhood, making a lot of noise and urinating or vomiting in their yards.”

So that preventionists could have an impact early in the planning stages, Adsit, along with

We want to be proactive so the police, the fire department and ambulance drivers don’t have to be reactive.



Dan Tomsky, an IPS senior preventionist, formed an East Village/Ballpark Advisory Group under the auspices of the Institute for Public Strategies’ Vitality San Diego Project. The Vitality Project is a community and economic development program promoting the development and adoption of safe and responsible alcohol and other drug policies and practices in the 13 neighborhoods that make up downtown and uptown San Diego.

The advisory group’s first step was to study other cities where similar development had taken place, such as San Francisco, Cleveland and Milwaukee, to see what prevention steps had been taken. What did they find? Not much.

“Essentially not a lot of work had been done before this,” Adsit said. “We found we were going to have to set precedent.”

The advisory group quickly set out to identify community leaders, such as the chairperson of



the East Village Association, as well as local police representatives so they could begin to get their message heard.

"We want them to know that none of this is about prohibition," Adsit said. "What we are really striving for is quality of life."

Along the way, members of the advisory group worked hand in hand with the department of Alcoholic Beverage Control and the San Diego County Responsible Hospitality Coalition.

They have now been meeting with community leaders, police, Padres officials and developers for a year, asking questions about alcohol policies at the stadium and in the surrounding community. They want to know what type of alcohol licenses will be granted in the neighborhood, the number of licenses, and what conditions will be put on alcohol sales in various locations.

Besides the stadium, the area will be home to a major community park, known as The Park at the Park, and a Tailgate Park for tailgaters and other event-goers. Advisory group members believe it is important for the health and safety of attendees and the community at large to have sufficient policies and enforcement in order to reduce the risk of alcohol-related disturbances, pedestrian injury and traffic incidents.

"We want to make sure that the city park is a healthy, safe, responsible place," Adsit said. "And the Tailgate Park will have 600 to 800 spaces. We want to know what the alcohol policy will be there."

Moreover, Adsit and his group want to help

"craft and hone alcohol policy" throughout the entire area that is being redeveloped.

To that end, the group recently developed a draft list of policy recommendations that covers the entire area. These recommendations address concerns about underage access to

alcohol, public intoxication, fights, noise, vandalism and traffic safety.

Among the recommendations are the following:

In the ballpark:

- Require Responsible Beverage Service training for all vendors
- Curtail alcohol sales by the seventh inning at ball games and an hour before the scheduled ending of other events
- Limit each alcohol purchase to two drinks.
- Ban or restrict alcohol billboards, banners and other promotions in the park
- Have alcohol-free seating and a designated-driver program

In the East Village Redevelopment area:

- Establish and maintain a clear and deliberate plan concerning the number, quantity and types of alcohol licenses that will be granted
- Establish Conditional Use Permit criteria regarding alcohol sales and service, security, noise levels and physical conditions (for example, exterior lighting)
- Require RBS training for sales personnel
- Restrict access to outdoor seating at restaurants that serve alcohol

In Tailgate Park:

- Limit or ban alcohol consumption
- Provide adequate security and/or law enforcement

In Park at the Park:

- Limit or ban alcohol consumption during controlled public events

- Ban alcohol consumption during nonevent times
Adsit said the group's next step will be to publicize concerns and recommendations through media advocacy. The plan is to promote newspaper coverage, participate in radio talk shows, and hold events that will attract media coverage. They will be quick to point out the benefits to the community.

"In the long run, this is going to save the city money," he said. "They will spend less on police, ambulances and detox."

Marian Novak, project director of the San Diego County Responsible Hospitality Coalition, agreed in a recent article in San Diego's *Downtown News*. "If there are good alcohol service practices throughout the community, businesses produce more income and the community is happy because it is a safer environment," she said.

Members of the community seem to be catching on.

"There are the not-so-obvious considerations of responsible alcohol service, sales and marketing that we would like to see addressed even before more construction begins," Barbara Fouquette, community manager at Hacienda Townhomes in East Village, told the *Downtown News*.

While focusing mainly on the future, the advisory group has also had some impact on the present. When they heard complaints from neighbors about loud Saturday night raves held at a neighborhood location, they took action. The landlord of the building was notified, and the raves were stopped shortly thereafter.

Yet Adsit said much of the excitement about the group's work is about being involved before problems start.

"So much of our work is about remedying problem areas," he said. "But this is proactive public health. We are getting to be part of the urban design process, and that is exciting." □

For additional information contact Rob Adsit at IPS, 619/474-8844 x16 or radsit@publicstrategies.org and Dan Tomsky at 619/474-8844, x15 or dtomsky@publicstrategies.org.

Southern California Prevention Exchange



MEMBERS OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PREVENTION EXCHANGE held their first retreat in

December and agreed on three priority areas on which to focus their efforts during 2002. Those areas are:

- driving under the influence
- youth access to alcohol
- university and college alcohol policies

Members concurred that all three tend to be concerns throughout the Southern California region.

"These issues clearly cut across county boundaries," said Sandy Hoover of the Institute for Public Strategies, organizer of the event. "We want to take a look at how we can tackle them regionally."

That sort of regional teamwork is what the

"Part of this process is to create some common understanding among counties facing similar problems around alcohol and other drugs," Al Medina, Alcohol and Drug Services Program Administrator for the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, told *Prevention File*. "What we learn here may be applicable in other regions and create higher levels of commitment to prevention goals."

Medina and other San Diego prevention providers were leaders in bringing together the new group.

"San Diego has really promoted this idea," said Hoover. "One of the reasons may be that in dealing with youth (drinking across the border) in Mexico, San Diego has seen that it is a regional

Baja • San Diego Imperial • Orange

The Prevention Exchange, the first group of its kind in the country, is serving as a test model to determine if collaboration can be more effective.

Southern California Prevention Exchange is all about. The group consists of members from ten counties, from San Diego and Imperial counties in the south to San Luis Obispo and Kern counties in the north. Baja California, Mexico, is an adjunct member of the group. Their goal is to pool ideas and resources to boost the impact of their prevention work.

For years, local governments, local agencies and community groups have been the mainstays of prevention activities—often working separately or with minimal collaboration. The Prevention Exchange, the first group of its kind in the country, is serving as a test model to determine if collaboration can be more effective.

problem. ZIP code data show that they (youth) come from all over Southern California."

It is clear that underage drinking across the Mexican border is more than just a San Diego problem, and that other such regional problems may exist, Hoover said.

The area the Southern California Prevention Exchange serves is home to more than 20 million people. It is a diverse geographic and demographic region, ranging from densely populated Los Angeles County with 10 million residents, to the sparse farming communities of Imperial County with fewer than 150,000 residents.

Still, the area has many commonalities, not the least of which is a vast freeway network. Southern Californians are dependent on travel by car, and

that makes them especially vulnerable to alcohol-related traffic crashes.

Hoover said the goals of the Prevention Exchange are to focus on media advocacy and environmental prevention strategies. The group already experienced some media success during Spring Break 2001. Spring Break is a time when high-risk underage drinking is commonplace as students flock to beaches and other resort areas. Prior to the 2001 break, IPS provided exchange members with action kits suggesting sample letters to the editor and op-ed pieces that would bring attention to Spring Break issues.

The results were evident—there was considerable media coverage of campus and off-campus activities.

When the group met in December, members not only determined their priorities for 2002; they took a look at an impaired-driving-prevention pilot project in Ventura that may serve as a model for the entire region.

The Institute for Public Strategies, working with a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

administration of "Place of Last Drink" surveys to participants in the four DUI programs that serve Ventura County. The surveys, designed by researcher John Clapp of San Diego State University, ask not just where the last drink was consumed but where all drinks were consumed that day. Other questions revolve around how many drinks were consumed and what type of alcohol it was, as well as what day and time the arrest took place. Respondents are asked how many miles they had driven between the place of last drink and their arrest, and what their blood alcohol content was at the time of arrest.

Looking at the locations at which drinking occurred and how many drinks were consumed over a period of time helps indicate the kind of drinking predominantly engaged in, and contributes to understanding the profiles of particular retail locations. Marian Novak, director of the San Diego County Responsible Hospitality Coalition, has provided RBS training in Ventura County based on the model developed for the Place of Last Drink project in San Diego County.

"Our plan is to share information among counties," Hicks said.

Hicks also shared with the Prevention Exchange how the rest of the impaired-driving pilot project works. Once Ventura County's possible problem outlets are determined through Place of Last Drink surveys, specially trained assessors visit those outlets and conduct risk assessments. In the end, those outlets that clearly have a problem are intervened upon.

"We are interested to see how the Ventura project works out," Hoover said. "This may be something we can use in other counties."

Hoover said the group will also continue to look for other pilot projects that may serve a regional interest.

The December retreat was planned to be the first of a regular series of annual meetings. Additional future plans call for:

- an annual cross-county media action
- implementation of a Regional Media Advocacy Center
- development of a resource and funding plan

Ventura • San Luis Los Angeles • Kern

contract awarded to Ventura County Alcohol and Drug Programs Prevention, Intervention and Training Division, is conducting the intervention pilot project. Dan Hicks, an IPS senior preventionist based in Ventura, explained to the group how the program works. Overall, the goal is to determine which alcohol outlets in the community are not practicing responsible beverage service and to intervene in those problem outlets.

"We're trying to narrow it down to the 10 percent of the outlets causing 80 percent of the problems," Hicks said.

As a first step, the pilot project is overseeing the

Perhaps even more interesting to the Southern California Prevention Exchange is that early survey results show that a number of DUI cases in Ventura County have ties to other counties.

"Just because someone is in a DUI program in Ventura County doesn't mean that is where they had their last drink or even where they were arrested," Hicks said. "It just means they live in Ventura County."


Early data show that DUI drivers regularly cross county lines, either to visit alcohol outlets in other counties, or—once they've visited those outlets—to travel to other locations.

- Provision of workshops or trainings
- One or two policy forums each year

The Prevention Exchange has already developed its own Website that features news items of interest and a bulletin board on which members can exchange ideas. Currently, the Website is password-protected to allow for a free-flowing discussion.

For additional information on the Southern California Prevention exchange call, Sandy Hoover at IPS, 619/474-8844.

Safe Streets Now! Cleaning up the Neighborhood

 "WE DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH DRUG HOUSES, GANGS OR THUGS" read the headline in San Diego's *North Park News*. What the community newspaper was referring to was a resource program called Safe Streets Now!

Safe Streets Now! helps everyday citizens rid their communities of drug and gang houses, problem alcohol outlets, houses of prostitution

neighborhoods and work with them through the resolution of problems."

Since Heider opened his doors in San Diego eight years ago, he has worked on more than 1,000 cases. Of those, only about 70 have actually gone to court. Heider said that once a neighborhood is organized and legal action threatened, property owners are generally motivated to take action.

Of those cases that did end up in the courtroom, several stand out. In a 1997 case residents and members of a church in central San Diego complained about drug and prostitution activities at a nearby \$22-a-night motel. When the owner did nothing to make changes, Heider helped the complainants organize and file suit. In the end, they were awarded \$39,000 in damages.



and other nuisances that can cause disruption and decay in even the most solid areas. The main method of the program is to treat problem sites as businesses that are causing a public nuisance. Under California law, property owners are required to use their property in ways "conducive to the peace and harmony of the neighborhood." Thus, when peace and harmony are disrupted, concerned residents have grounds for a court fight.

"Our primary interest is to help the community that is being negatively affected," said Bob Heider, director of San Diego's Safe Streets Now! "We organize

James Friedhofer, an attorney and member of the church, told the *San Diego Union-Tribune* that it was a satisfying victory that wasn't about money.

**Our primary
interest is to help
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negatively
affected,**

"They (complainants) went from a feeling of frustration to fighting back in a very civilized way, within the rules," he said. "They just quietly went about it the way the law provides."

Better yet, after the judgment, the owner of the motel decided to sell the property, and the new owners chose to clean it up.

In a 1996 Vista case, citizens turned to Heider and Safe Streets Now! for help dealing

with a rental duplex that was the site of gang and drug activity. Horrified neighbors said they lived with shouting, blaring music and gunshots day and night. One neighbor said a stabbing had taken place outside her living room window, and another said visiting relatives had had beer cans thrown at them.

Written complaints brought no action from the landlord, so, with guidance from Safe Streets Now!, the group took the matter to court, where the judge awarded them \$14,000 in damages. When the landlord appealed that decision, the judge tacked on another \$2,000. The gang tenants were evicted.

The San Diego Safe Streets Now! program is part of a national nonprofit effort that was started in the city of Oakland in 1989. The thought was that many neighborhoods are traumatized by nuisance properties, but there often aren't enough government or law enforcement resources to help. The goal was to involve citizens to use a civil remedy model to reduce crime, redress public nuisance grievances, and turn high crime areas into safe and healthy neighborhoods.

Since that time, Safe Streets Now! programs in cities across America have trained more than 15,000 citizens to close down more than 1,800 drug/gang houses and blighted properties, and to win more than \$2.5 million in court judgments, with no reported retaliations.

The program has won numerous awards, including the prestigious "Innovations in American Government" honor from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and The National Council of Justice "Pass Award." In addition, the program has received praise from high places. Said former President Bill Clinton, "Ultimately it is the citizens of the community who can make their neighborhoods safe, and Safe Streets Now! is a tool that is making this happen."

Heider said the most rewarding aspect of

his job is empowering people to eradicate the problems they see in their own communities. Safe Streets Now! turns such problem-solving into a step-by-step action plan. The steps in that process include:

- *Organizing.* Neighbors need to meet to discuss concerns about the problem property. They need to assess potential damages, including emotional distress and economic loss (a decline in property value). The group must determine which members will become plaintiffs in any legal action.
- *Training.* Safe Streets Now! offers a 90-minute training session and supplies necessary materials, including log sheets for documentation.
- *Evidence.* Plaintiffs need to collect evidence, keeping detailed logs of alleged criminal activity at the problem property for a minimum of three to four weeks. They need to document who, what, when, where and why. Photos may be used as evidence. When the police are summoned to the site, "incident numbers" should be recorded.
- *Demand Letter.* A Safe Streets Now! facilitator helps the group prepare a demand letter to be sent to the landlord of the problem property. This letter lists problems and puts the landlord on notice that neighborhood residents intend to take legal action unless those problems are corrected. The names of participants can be kept confidential; Safe Streets Now! is listed as the contact agency.
- *Filing.* If the landlord does not move to resolve problems, the group files an action in small claims court. Though there generally are limits to the amount that a small claims judge can award, complainants can ask for a "consolidated" judgment. This takes into account

damages caused by a single property to a number of people. The potential for judgments in the tens of thousands of dollars often prompts property owners to take action or negotiate.

- *Trial.* Plaintiffs and defendants meet in court to submit evidence and state their cases.
- *Ruling and Appeals.* The judge issues a ruling within 30 days of the trial. Defendants who are ordered to pay damages may appeal to Superior Court. Losing plaintiffs may not appeal, but they may file new claims after a 100-day waiting period.

Heider said that more than 50 percent of the cases he has assisted in San Diego County have involved alcohol and/or other drugs. To help citizens deal with drug houses, he has put together a Community Action Guide to Create a Drug-Free Neighborhood. The 13-page guide features the specific steps to resolving such situations.

Currently, Heider receives most of his funding from the city of San

Diego and some from the San Diego County. He employs one part-time staff person, but said he has enough work for three full-time staffers.

Heider said that the problems caused by trouble spots—noise, violence, traffic crashes, litter and graffiti—often cause great emotional and mental distress among neighbors, and he urges them to take action.

"Now is the time," he said. "Take back your neighborhood." □

**The San Diego
Safe Streets
Now! program
is part of
a national,
nonprofit effort
that was started
in the city of
Oakland in
1989.**

*For more information on Safe Streets Now!
Call 619/299-5408.*