

# Back-to-school tips from Drug Coalition

The start of school is often exciting and challenging academically, yet for young teens and high schoolers, a new school year may also provide some "tests" outside of the classroom.

"Even when trying to do their best academically and socially, it can be hard for teenagers to resist peer pressure," says Shelly Mowrey, Fountain Hills Coalition director.

"With the pressures of wanting to fit in, many seek approval of their peers and begin experimenting with drugs and alcohol."

Mowrey said the coalition exists to help parents and their families.

Here are some steps offered by the coalition that parents can take to work with their teen on how to handle peer pressure as the young school year continues:

## In the know

Talk with your middle school and high school stu-

dent. Teenagers often get into trouble when they act without thinking. Talking about peer pressure can help prepare for a difficult moment with friends.

Helping to avoid peer pressure isn't just about making sure they know the risks involved - it's about the parent being "in the know" as well. One way to stay in the know is to sign up for the coalition's Safe Homes Network.

The network is a group of concerned parents and citizens who have taken a pledge not to allow underage drinking or illegal drug use in their homes.

The Safe Homes Network gives you protection to protect children from the harmful, often deadly, consequences of alcohol and illegal drug use.

"Being a part of the Safe Homes Network gives you peace of mind," says Maria Perreault, Fountain Hills mom and coalition program manager.

"When your child goes to a friend's home you're

not familiar with, in just seconds you can check the Safe Homes Network to see if the child's family are members and know your child is safe."

The coalition plans to have a presence at sporting events throughout the school year, once again offering a series of cash drawings.

Those who are members of SHN or sign up to become members receive an extra chance to be a lucky cash winner.

## Risky situations

A high school student should feel comfortable saying "no." But for some teens, saying "no" to their friends and to a "buddy" friend may be difficult, Mowrey said. Talk to your son or daughter about different ways of responding to peer pressure.

Also, encourage walking away from unhealthy friendships built on peer pressure. Develop a rescue plan with your child. Make sure to emphasize that

you are available to pick them up or help them if they are ever put in a risky situation and will always prioritize safety over punishment.

Another tool that's available to Fountain Hills parents is the coalition's Early Action Kits.

The Early Action Kit is a home drug-testing kit. It offers youths an immediate out if they are asked if they want to use drugs or alcohol. The child can simply say, "No I can't smoke that, my parents have a drug test at home."

See accompanying list of where the test kits are available.

## Positive parenting

Parents should help teens cope with peer pressure by encouraging positive relationships and becoming involved and supportive in his or her interests.

When a teen feels confident, he or she is less likely to give in to peer pressure. Participation in after-school clubs and sports will help students avoid potential scenarios and form relationships with peers who share these positive interests.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office offers ac-

countable parent and teaching the strategies needed to cope with peer pressure as the new school year begins.

"Remember we're here for you. Go to FHCoalition.org and we will provide tools for you at every step of the way."

"Like" us on Facebook and post a back-to-school photo."

"Ensure a safe and healthy year by being an

## Get your Early Action Kit

The coalition's Early Action Kits are easy for Fountain Hills parents to obtain and designed to be discreet. You may pick one up at the following locations:

Carma Blackburn, LCSW  
16712 E. Ave. of the Fountains  
(480) 993-5457

Dr. Matthew J. Hummel, MD  
16838 E. Palisades Blvd.  
Building C #153  
(480) 816-3131

Deputy Jill Ochsner  
FHUSD Resource Officer, MCSO  
Fountain Hills High School  
(480) 664-5539

Fountain Hills Fire Station #1- Administration Office  
16246 Palisades Boulevard  
Non-emergency Telephone: (480) 837-9820

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO)  
16246 Palisades Boulevard  
Non-emergency Telephone: (480) 837-2047

## Oktoberfest fun Sept. 25-26

The Fountain Hills Oktoberfest is the first in the Valley to kick off the Oktoberfest season starting on Friday, Sept. 25, at Fountain Park.

The two-day event continues the following day from 5 to 10 p.m.

The Fountain Hills Oktoberfest is a celebration of authentic German traditions that originated in Munich, Germany in 1810.

Now these fun and colorful outfits are available for sale, and some can be rented at the Mardi Gras Costume Shop on Granite Reef in Scottsdale.

With many different Oktoberfests in the Valley, the requests for dirndls and lederhosen locally has skyrocketed and the Mardi Gras Costume Shop has

ning Hefeweizen.

Accessories include to compete in contests for fun and prizes such as the famous Bier Stein holding competition and the Alhorn blowing contest.

Dirndls and lederhosen are the traditional attire worn at the 200-plus year old Oktoberfest celebration that originated in Munich, Germany in 1810.

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With many different Oktoberfests in the Valley, the requests for dirndls and lederhosen locally has skyrocketed and the Mardi Gras Costume Shop has

now met that need.

Accessories include shirts, hats and more. They will be available at the Fountain Hills Oktoberfest.

Contact Mario Magana at 480-948-4030 or mario@mardigrascostumes.com for more information.

For more information on the event, call (480) 235-7134 or visit www.Oktoberfestfountainhills.com.

The Fountain Hills Oktoberfest is hosted by AMVETS Post No. 7, Elks Lodge 2846 and the Town of Fountain Hills.

Volunteers are always needed; fill out the volunteer form on the above website or contact Denise Ricketts at (480) 848-3777.

## Halloween in the Hills Avenue event returns October 31

The Avenue of the Fountains will be open only to pedestrian traffic from 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31, for the annual Halloween in the Hills spooktacular celebration.

Some reports have been circulating that the event would not occur.

That's not accurate, said organizer Stephanie Bjorkman of Sami Fine Jewelry. More than 40 local businesses and charities will provide free carnival-type game booths. The town rents bounce houses for the youngsters to release pent-up energy. Businesses will stay open for trick or treating, said Bjorkman.

Representatives of businesses, civic organizations, church and social clubs are invited to attend a 9 a.m. planning meeting tomorrow, Sept. 10, Oct. 15 or Oct. 29 in the Community Center.

Interested participants also can visit [www.halloweeninthehills.com](http://www.halloweeninthehills.com).

Two costume competitions are planned for pets

and their owners, and children only. Sponsors are Sami Fine Jewelry and Steadfast Construction.

In the past, "Pets and Their People" attract just about every kind of animal imaginable. From dogs, pigs, bunnies, and birds, the contest also is amusing to view.



This year the competition will start at 5:45 p.m. Registration will begin at 5:15 p.m. Participation is

free; prizes will be awarded.

The costume contest for children under 18 years old will start at 6:30 p.m. Registration will start at 6 p.m. at the stage area on the east side of the Avenue near Chase Bank.

Other activities will include a firefighter candy drop, martial arts demonstration and Zombie Thriller Dance routine.

Charlotte, the friendly spider, will hold court beginning at 5:30 p.m. in Sonoran Lifestyle Real Estate office that will be transformed into a "Spider Village."

Don't fill up on candy because Noon Kiwanis Club will sell hamburgers, hot dogs, drinks and other snacks. Avenue restaurants such as Sofrita and All American Grill will feature specials on food and beverages.

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**Kathy Garrett**  
16625 E. Ave. of the Fountains  
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(next to Sami's Fine Jewelry)  
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Natural gas lines can be buried anywhere. So it's important to know how to recognize and respond to a natural gas leak...no matter where you are.

**A leak may be present if you:**

- SMELL:** An odor similar to rotten eggs, even if it's faint or momentary.
- HEAR:** A hissing or roaring sound coming from the ground, above-ground piping, or gas appliance.
- SEE:** Dirt or water blowing into the air, unexplained dead or dying grass or vegetation, or standing water continuously bubbling.

**If you suspect a leak:**

- Leave the area immediately.
- From a safe place, call **911** and Southwest Gas at **1-877-860-6020**, day or night, whether you're a customer or not. A Southwest Gas representative will be there as soon as possible.
- Don't smoke or use matches or lighters.
- Don't turn on or off any electrical switches, thermostats, or appliance controls; or do anything that could cause a spark.
- Don't start or stop an engine, or use automated doors.

For more information about natural gas safety, visit [swgas.com/safety](http://swgas.com/safety) or call **1-877-860-6020**.