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Teen alcohol forum: Julie Patterson (left) listens to fellow Plymouth Salem High School student, Katie Keim.

"When all your friends are doing it every weekend, it just kind of upsets you, really," said Nance. "When you just want to do something else and they just want to continue doing this. So, you try to find other (friends) to hang with instead. It's bad because you're losing your friendships."

Peer pressure

Peer pressure, more so

between guys than girls, is a big factor, said the students. "It's kind of something they do to prove themselves to other guys," said Marcella Conta, a student at John Glenn High School.

Parents also play a major role in the decision, said the teens. "I would be scared to death if my parents found out," said Wade. "They wouldn't trust me and I wouldn't be allowed to do



Chuck Nance, Garden City High School

anything. By instilling those values in me, and placing that trust upon my shoulders... it has kind of made me not want to mess

Jessica Nance John Glenn High School, Westland.

around with that kind of thing." It's a matter of respect, said Tablae.

"My dad has a huge influence on me, and I wouldn't want to do anything that would disappoint him or dishonor my family," she said. "Also, I have a little sister and I want to be role model for her."

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drinking altogether, but to educate students about healthy, social alternatives to frat parties and such.

The first six weeks of college are the most volatile time for students, she noted. Anxiety, newfound freedom and the cultural expectation that college is a place for heavy partying play into it.

"There's a high-risk period of time and what you want to do is get them through this time safely," Flax said. "There's a lot of risks associated with it. Our focus is on reduction. We want to help them make healthy choices and reduce the risks."

Making teens aware

Education should begin during the middle school years, said a group of high school students who recently participated in a teen alcohol forum hosted by The Observer Newspapers and moderated by Flax.

The alcohol and drug awareness

and prevention programs introduced in elementary school are good, they said, but more needs to be done as students prepare to enter high school.

"I think DARE is a very good program, but my problem with it is that they're targeting too young of an age group," said Angela Tablae, a student at Plymouth Canton High School. "I think they should target 7th, 8th and 9th graders because that's when you really start getting into the peer groups and start wanting to be a part of something."

Health classes in high school, which cover topics such as alcohol and drug use, are "a little too late," she added, because students in 11th and 12th grade are "already a part of these activities."

Jessica Nance, a student at John Glenn High School, agreed. She said second and third grade kids really don't understand the issue.

Continual reminders on the

dangers of drinking should be a priority for high schools, said Tablae. Compelling stories from young people who have been negatively affected by alcohol can impact teenagers' decisions.

"Aside from having people talk about drug abuse (prevention), we also need (students) who say, 'I'm against alcohol and drug abuse because of this, because of these influences in my life.' We need both ends of the spectrum to come together and say this is why it's bad," said Tablae.

On the college campus, Flax said the first challenge is to make people realize that excessive drinking is a problem. She said the social expectations and cultural mindset that it's OK to drink in college makes prevention and awareness difficult.

"It makes it challenging to really get a consensus that it's a problem," she said. "We need to work with the students to change that culture."

Artist sets workshop

Learn to paint flowers in watercolors with artist Donna Vogelheim in an art workshop offered by the Farmington Hills Cultural Arts Division. The workshop will take place 9:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, May 18 and 19 at the new classroom studio facility at the Heritage Park Stables location. The workshop is open to all skill levels, and will include a short lecture by Vogelheim and then demonstration of technique and instruction. Students will be able to utilize the artist's vast botanical knowledge as well as learn to analyze and simplify floral shapes.

While studying biology at the University of Michigan, Vogelheim spent hours drawing what

she viewed through microscope. The visual skills learned in the laboratory later developed into a love of fine art, and she became a painter. Vogelheim has since traveled the United States and Canada, conducting numerous lectures, workshops and demonstrations. Her work has been included in several publications and can be found in galleries, corporations, and private collections. Vogelheim currently holds the position of art coordinator for the Assarian Cancer Center of Providence Hospital Cancer Institute, and is known locally for her participation in the Farmington Artists Club.

Space is limited for this workshop. Call (248) 473-9570.

Preschool enrolling for 2002-03

Mayfair Co-op Preschool is now accepting applications for the 2002-03 school year. Enrollments are being taken for the Mom & Tot Program meeting on Monday or Wednesday and the Four Year Old Program meeting

on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

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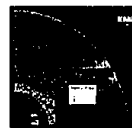
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