

**IS YOUR TEENAGER PLANNING A SPRING BREAK TRIP?  
THINK IT OVER CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU SAY 'YES'!**

**East Williston-Roslyn Coalition Takes Strong Stand on Unsupervised Teen Trips**

This time of year, many teenagers are already making reservations for spring break, leaving many parents to face the question of whether to allow their children to go. The East Williston-Roslyn Community Coalition for Drug-Free Youth has taken a strong stand against trips that are not sponsored or endorsed by school or any legitimate organization. The Coalition urges parents to educate themselves about the very real risks to their children on spring break trips to Florida, Mexico or the Caribbean and to consider safer alternatives to unsupervised travel.

The Coalition adopted a resolution last year against unsupervised spring break and graduation trips at which excessive drinking, drug use and other unacceptable behaviors by high school seniors are common and well documented. For example, a 2006 American Medical Association (AMA) poll of women age 17-35 documents disturbing events as unsupervised spring break trips bring up a completely new set of issues including increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases, blackouts and violence.<sup>1</sup> Several sources claim that these trips put young people at very high risk of injury, illness and even death and that parents should consider these risks carefully before allowing their children to go.

According to the American Medical Association, each year in Cancun, Mexico, a major spring break destination, the city and hospitals report an increase in deaths, rapes, injuries, assaults and arrests related to drinking.<sup>2</sup> “The U.S. Consulate in Merida, Mexico, whose territory includes Cancun, says that during the eight-week spring break period in 2002, U.S. students accounted for two deaths, 360 arrests, four injuries that required medical evacuations out of the area, one rape, 495 reports of lost or stolen property and 504 ‘general welfare inquiries’ — usually from parents back in the USA who were worried about a student's whereabouts.”<sup>3</sup>

In 2005, Daytona, Florida county officials reported twice as many rape cases during the month of spring break.<sup>4</sup> The Overseas Security Advisory Council, an affiliate of the US State Department,

states that all persons 16 years of age or older can be tried as adults in such foreign countries as the Bahamas if they are found to commit crimes involving the importation, purchase, possession or use of drugs. High school seniors can and will incur severe penalties, including fines or imprisonment. The OSAC is directly related to overseas security functions of the Department of State.<sup>5</sup>

The Coalition's resolution against unsupervised travel reads in part: "Whereas when spring break trips and graduation weekends are without adult supervision, they can create a dangerous and life threatening environment, and promote activities that are of danger to all teenagers or young adults, the East Williston-Roslyn Community Coalition for Drug-Free Youth acknowledges the risk and life threatening situations teenagers will face and does not endorse or recommend to parents that they give permission for their children to attend or participate in such activities that will jeopardize their well being or their life."

The Coalition advocates other family and/or service-oriented experiences for teens such as:

- Planning a family event with your teen
- Planning an event with other families or
- Use the time to make college visits with your teen <sup>6</sup>

Below are alternative spring break suggestions and contact information to help parents keep their teens safe:

1. Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk: 631-924-4966 x225 for Individual Walk-on Volunteers
2. New York Cares: 212-228-5000 or [www.nycares.org](http://www.nycares.org)
3. Habitat for Humanity, New Orleans, LA: 985-639-0656 or [www.esthfh.org](http://www.esthfh.org) and go to volunteering
4. Global Volunteers-Partners in Development: 800-487-1074 x6155 or [www.globalvolunteers.org](http://www.globalvolunteers.org)
5. Hands on Network: 404-979-2900, Heather Apollier or [www.handsonnetwork.org](http://www.handsonnetwork.org)
6. Heifer International: 877-663-1681 or [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org) or contact [Pat.Stanley@heifer.org](mailto:Pat.Stanley@heifer.org)

For more information regarding this article or the East Williston-Roslyn Community Coalition for Drug-Free Youth, please contact Cathy Samuels, President, 248-3489.

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<sup>1</sup> Erin Woods, American Medical Association Press Release: “Sex and intoxication among women more common on spring break according to AMA poll”, March 8, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Erin Woods, American Medical Association Press Release: “Sex and intoxication among women more common on spring break according to AMA poll”, March 8, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Leinwand, USA TODAY, “Alcohol-soaked spring break lures students abroad”, January 5, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Erin Woods, American Medical Association Press Release: “Sex and intoxication among women more common on spring break according to AMA poll”, March 8, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> OSAC – affiliate of US State Department

<sup>6</sup> Dakota County Public Health Department, 10/04.