

QAC Goes Purple: Sparking Vital Conversations on Substance Abuse at the County Fair

On Saturday night, September 16, 2025, the Queen Anne's County 4H Fair provided numerous educational opportunities under the QAC Goes Purple tent, fostering meaningful interactions with community members on substance abuse prevention.

Several encounters stood out, including conversations with elderly residents, particularly women. Many revealed they still store medications in bathroom cabinets. This presented a chance to emphasize that anyone using the bathroom—especially young visitors like grandchildren, nieces, or nephews—might snoop through these cabinets, potentially leading to medications being taken without notice. Some believed only potent painkillers like oxycodone and Percocet, or benzodiazepines such as Xanax and Valium, needed securing. However, explanations highlighted that other commonly prescribed drugs, including gabapentin, Seroquel, trazodone, clonidine, propranolol, and hydroxyzine, are also highly sought by adolescents experimenting with substances. Unfortunately, many young people assume prescription medications are inherently safe simply because they are dispensed by pharmacies (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020).

Another notable interaction involved a group of four boys, aged 14 to 15, who initially behaved disruptively and were asked to leave the tent after making inappropriate comments. They later returned politely, requesting more toy airplanes—a clever giveaway item. This opened the door to discussions on the dangers of teen alcoholism and cannabis use. Fifteen-year-old males face particularly high risks of developing alcoholism (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2020). The boys appeared engaged when informed about the hazards of mind-altering substances, including alcohol, during adolescence. Research indicates that while young people may seek altered states, they fear causing themselves brain damage. They showed interest in learning that the prefrontal cortex does not fully develop until around age 24, making the teen years crucial for healthy brain formation (Arain et al., 2013). Amid stressful situations and hormonal changes, substances might seem tempting for coping, but it's essential to foster natural mechanisms that promote brain growth and resilience. The conversation also covered the profound risk of anti-motivational syndrome associated with frequent cannabis use (Volkow et al., 2016).

By the discussion's end, one boy shared that both his mother and stepfather were in rehabilitation. Another candidly answered difficult questions, revealing that Adderall is more popular than oxycodone among local high school students. Further talk addressed the dangers of counterfeit medications circulating on the streets—pills resembling prescription Adderall but homemade, posing severe overdose risks (Drug Enforcement Administration, 2022).

Overall, the evening featured enriching exchanges with community members of all ages. Participating in QAC Goes Purple has been a privilege, offering thought-provoking insights on substance abuse prevention.

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