

**NIPC FALL 2004 INHALANT UPDATE**  
**(Please contact us if you want to receive future UPDATES)**

Greetings everyone:

I would like to welcome all new members to this list and say hi to all of our old friends. Since our last **UPDATE** we have added hundreds of new people. The **UPDATE** serves to provide new inhalant information and resources. If you know of someone who would be interested in receiving the **NIPC INHALANT UPDATE**, please pass this along and encourage others to join this list. If you have something you would like to contribute to our next **UPDATE** or any comments, pass them along.

We have a number of important issues to discuss and highlight. Inhalant abuse made the national spotlight with the airing of inhalant segments on the **CBS EVENING & AM NEWS.** Since our last **UPDATE** there have been several inappropriate inhalant depictions in movies and advertisements as well as several proactive inhalant education efforts noted in the **CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY** discussion. From a data perspective - **INHALANT ABUSE CONTINUES TO RISE FOR TEENS.** Additionally, national surveys point to increases in female inhalant abuse while male abuse declines. **PARTNERSHIP FOR A DRUG-FREE AMERICA** data indicates significant increases in middle school inhalant abuse while both youth and parent perceptions of inhalant risks decrease. A review of **CDC'S YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEILLANCE SURVEY** points out those states that exceed the national median inhalant abuse rate. To help stem this tide we encourage as many of you as possible participate in the 13<sup>th</sup> annual **NATIONAL INHALANTS & POISONS AWARENESS WEEK (NIPAW), March 20 –26, 2005.** New **NIDA RESEARCH** points out vulnerable populations and new risks from inhalant abuse and stresses the importance of early prevention efforts. The NIPC will be getting new youth-focused inhalant posters and a youth-focused mini web site as a result of being selected as a **NATIONAL CREATE-A-THON** campaign recipient by Red Deluxe in Memphis, TN. With the ever-present danger of **REFRIGERANT THEFT FROM AIR CONDITIONING UNITS** to get high we discuss one solution to the problem. We are providing news about **STATEWIDE INHALANT PREVENTION COALITIONS** that have formed and a planned 2005 inhalant prevention and treatment institute. The emerging **FAMILIES & FRIENDS OF INHALANT VICTIMS** section brings news, a call for participation and a request for assistance in developing a memorial section on our web site. We have again included a very brief NIPC **NEEDS ASSESSMENT** to assist us better meet your needs. In the

**NIPC SUPPORT** section we have included an urgent appeal for assistance because our funding has been reduced by 40%. We conclude this **UPDATE** with **END NOTES** ... some personal thoughts including. I've included, as a postscript, a message from the Dad of young man who died from huffing which drives home the importance of what we do.

I would like to thank the **Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)** for their continued support and faith in us and the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's CSAT and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)** and the **National Institute of Health's National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)** for their continuing support for the National Inhalants & Poisons Awareness Week campaign. Without these Agencies support and belief in the services we provide to the thousands of people who come to us each year with requests for help and resources the calls for help would go answered.

## **INHALANTS FEATURED ON CBS NEWS:**

**CBS Evening and AM News** broadcasts on June 1<sup>st</sup> and June 2<sup>nd</sup>, ran inhalant segments. The segments included parents who lost their children to inhalants (Toy Slayton who lost her son Johnson to butane and Marissa and Kim Manlove who lost their son David to computer cleaner), James, a young ex-huffer who was treated at Fairbanks, which provides addiction treatment and recovery services in Indianapolis, IN (<http://www.fairbanksd.org/>) and me. Toy and Marissa and Kim have spoken at our NIPAW news conferences in DC and have been strong inhalant prevention advocates.

**COMMENT:** In our opinion, the CBS piece is an excellent short overview of inhalant abuse and potential unintentional consequences. We would like to thank CBS News, producer Amy Birnbaum and reporter Mika Brzezinski for their outstanding work. To view the Evening News segment, please go to "New Items" at our web site, <http://www.inhalants.org>.

## **CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY – FIXIN' THE PROBLEM & BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION:**

Every now and again we get calls and emails from parents and other concerned individuals when a corporation inadvertently includes an inappropriate inhalant depiction in their advertisements or movies (please note the comment at the end of this section). The NIPC response is an immediate direct contact with the company

and an emailed “call to action” to our email list to contact the company involved via emails, phone calls and letters to educate about the inappropriateness of their depictions. Sometimes, when we get lucky, we can get national media coverage to help drive the issue. However it is up to us to make a difference - to raise our collective voices and hope that someone listens and then acts on our concerns. There are always concerns – can we make a difference? My response is – YES! - more times than not. I would like to say thank you to those who contacted us and made the effort to contact company officials and explain your concerns --- you did make a difference.

Since our last **UPDATE**, major corporations responded to your concerns and did something. Not only did some companies address our concerns but others are acting proactively to address the problem and raise awareness about inhalants.

**HALLMARK GREETING CARDS:** HALLMARK’S web site had an on-line animated greeting card with a helium huffing “party animal” – a giraffe. Calls and emails went out to Hallmark’s home office. Those who contacted Hallmark found a high degree of concern from those we contacted. Within a half hour of being contacted the card was pulled from their site and an apology was given.

**UPDATE: WARNER BROTHERS – THE MOVIE “SCOOBY DOO 2:”** When the movie was shown in theaters and in some of the movie trailers there was a scene with Shaggy huffing nitrous from a can of whipped cream (to view this scene see the CBS Evening News segment on our web site). A number of concerns were raised and suggestions made to Warner Brothers. The result, which I just heard about within the last couple of weeks, is that the scene was removed from the DVD and video releases of the movie.

**TOYS R’ US:** Toys R’ Us ran a series of commercials with their mascot Geoffrey seemingly affected by helium huffing. After being contacted the ads disappeared from the airwaves. The company said that the ads had completed their on-air rotation.

**URBAN OUTFITTERS:** This retailer was selling tee shirts emblazoned with “The Stuff You Huff” and images of several abused products. Urban Outfitters discontinued selling the shirts. The designer/manufacturer said they would redesign the shirts with an anti-huffing message.

The movie “**THIRTEEN:**” I would be remiss if I didn’t mention this movie – but I am not sure what to say. The opening scene is of the two young stars huffing

what appears to be computer cleaner (this scene is also included in the CBS Evening News piece on our site). The scene seemed integral to the movie's plot. The movie company was contacted to suggest that anti-inhalant information be distributed. No one heard anything in response to the suggestion.

**FALCON SAFETY PRODUCTS:** Falcon Safety Products, maker of the computer cleaner product **DUST-OFF**, has taken steps to provide the public with information about the appropriate use of their product. Falcon set aside a portion of their web site, Dr. Dust-Off Classroom, to promote the safe use of their product with a short video clip and links to several national organizations:

[http://www.falconsafety.com/dust\\_off/dr\\_dustoff/announcement.html](http://www.falconsafety.com/dust_off/dr_dustoff/announcement.html)

Falcon also donated time to run a Partnership for a Drug-Free America TV anti-huffing public service announcement, which also included mention of the NIPC and our toll free phone number, during a San Diego Sabers arena football game.

**REDNER'S MARKETS, INC.:** We were recently contacted by Redner's because they had an idea about how to raise awareness about inhalant abuse dangers. Redner's has approximately 37 grocery and 11 convenience stores in Eastern Pennsylvania. They are planning to include an inhalant awareness message with our web site and toll free phone number on the back of store coupons when a potentially misused product is sold. NIPC staff is working with Redner's to have this in place in the very near future. The NIPC has approached others with the suggestion that that they consider incorporating this public awareness approach.

**COMMENT:** The NIPC believes that the inappropriate depiction of inhalants is not an intentional objective of companies producing movies or advertisements – it happens mainly because of a lack of understanding and appreciation of the potential dangers of inhalant use. When an inappropriate inhalant message rears its ugly head the best approach is a well-reasoned response explaining your concerns with suggestions on what could be done to remedy the situation. If you feel your concerns have not been heard or acted on, contact local & national media and explain your concerns – convince the media that this is a problem in your community and a public health issue. The NIPC will be your partner in your efforts and will contact others to enlist their support.

One very good resource to assist your response is the **Entertainment Industries Council's** web site <http://www.eiconline.org> that includes inhalant depiction guidelines. Go to their site, then "Channels" then to "Spotlight on Depiction."

Inhalant depiction will be in chapter 16. If you reference this, just maybe the risk of more inappropriate messages will be reduced and hopefully eliminated.

## **INHALANTS – BY THE NUMBERS – IS THERE A GENDER ISSUE?**

### **National Survey on Drug Use & Health and Monitoring the Future**

Last month the latest data (2003) from the **National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)**, formerly the National Household Survey, became available. This is the second year of the new survey design so we can make some year-to-year comparisons. See <http://www.samhsa.gov/> then click on “Statistics and Data.”

Mean age of onset of first use continues to be younger for inhalant initiates than any other illicit substance measured by the survey. Females start abusing inhalants earlier than their male counterparts.

Approximately 169,000 persons are dependent or abuse inhalants. Approximately 104,000 are between the ages of 12 to 17 (this age ratio is greater for inhalants than any other substance).

Overall (ages 12 and above) inhalant abuse rates remained fairly stable (2003: almost 23 million lifetime; 2.075 million past year; and 570,000 past month). From a prevention perspective our concern is 12 to 17 year olds. For this population there were increases. However the only statistically significant increase was past month use by 16 or 17 year olds. In 2003, for 12 to 17 year olds, there were almost 2.7 million lifetime users; over 1.1 million past year users; and about 320,000 past month users.

Now – on to the GENDER ISSUE. Looking again at the 12 to 17 year old age group we find some interesting things. First, lifetime use for males (by percent and the numbers) is greater than female use. However, past year and past month (percentages and numbers) female use is greater than that of males. When we looked at trends between 2002 and 2003 we note that inhalant use **increased** for females numerically and by percentages lifetime, past year and past month while use by males **declined**.

We next looked at the **Monitoring the Future Study** (University of Michigan) trends. For the last 12 years, at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, females used inhalants more than males (between 2002 and 2003 female use increase was statistically significant). Further, for the first time, in 2002 and 2003, female use exceeded male use at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade level. See “Occasional Paper 60” at MTF’s site at <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/new.html>

**COMMENT:** What does this mean. For some reason inhalant abuse among females is on the rise while declining for males and this issue does not appear to be addressed. I have a sense that females are not given strong inhalant warnings because many might think that this is “just a thing boys do.” I believe that young women must be targeted with prevention messages to reverse this trend. Also, to better appreciate what is going on in the substance abuse field we need to look beyond overall trends for a particular substance. To better understand what is actually going on we need to look deeper – at age/grade, ethnicity and gender trends. How else are we going target prevention efforts? If you have state and/or local data that reflects grade/age and gender inhalant use, please forward on to us.

### **Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey:**

**Findings:** While inhalant abuse increases, perceptions of risk and danger decreases for young teens and parents do not talk “a lot” about inhalant dangers to their children.

#### **Teens:**

The latest Partnership for a Drug-Free America’s (PDFA) **Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey (PATS)** indicated that inhalant abuse by middle school children has increased by as much as 44 percent over a two-year period, driven by fewer and fewer children seeing risk in inhalant experimentation and use to get high. An analysis of survey data indicated that over the past two years inhalant abuse increased by 18 percent (from 22 to 26 percent) among 8<sup>th</sup> graders and by 44 percent (from 18 to 26 percent) among 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

As a parallel, the survey found that the percentage of young middle school students associating risk with using inhalants eroding significantly over the past two years. The perception that sniffing or huffing inhalants “can kill you” fell 14 percent among 8<sup>th</sup> graders (from 73 to 63 percent) and decreased 29 percent among 6<sup>th</sup> graders (from 68 to 48 percent). See <http://drugfreeamerica.org> then go to the box marked “I am Interested in,” then scroll down to “Recent Research.”

**Parents:**

While PDFFA survey noted the increases in inhalant abuse for 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and a decline in their perception of inhalant dangers, it was also noted there was a decline in parents belief that their children see a great risk in inhalant abuse. In fact, between 1998 and 2004, the survey noted that parents' belief that their children see a great risk from abusing inhalants once or twice declined from 68% to 67% and the belief associated with abusing inhalants regularly declined from 82% to 75%. Further, inhalants were almost the least likely substance parents would "talk a lot" about with their child (only 4 out of 10 parents discuss inhalant abuse "a lot" with their children compared to about 7 out 10 that discuss drugs like marijuana, alcohol and cigarettes with their children).

**COMMENT:** This data paints frightening scenario: both parents and youngsters perception of inhalant dangers are plummeting. Is it of little wonder that inhalant abuse increases for this youthful population? I believe we are in the midst of a "Not my child syndrome – he/she would never do something like that." If parents don't talk with their children about inhalant dangers the upward spiral of abuse will continue unabated.

**Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC):**

Recently the CDC released their latest (2003) results from their **Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS)** that can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>

Not only did we look at overall inhalant use results but also state results that we broke down by grade and gender for the last two reporting periods (2001 and 2003). What we can say from this review is that within states there appeared to be some unusual changes in use based on grade and gender. Please check CDC's web site and review your state's results.

At this time we would like to report on overall 30 day (current) and lifetime use rates of states in order of those exceeding the national median use rate.

Lifetime Use: Median rate was 12.4%; North Carolina – 15.4%; West Virginia – 15.1%; Utah – 14.6%; Nevada – 14.5%; Idaho – 14.3%; Kentucky – 14.3%; Montana – 13.8%; Michigan – 13.4%; Tennessee – 13.4%; Maine – 13.1%; New Hampshire – 13.1%; Indiana – 12.9%; Arizona – 12.6% and Texas – 12.5%.

30 Day or Current Use: Median – 3.8%; Massachusetts – 5.5%; West Virginia – 4.8%; Utah – 4.6%; Rhode Island – 4.6%; Kentucky – 4.3%; Michigan – 4.3%; Texas – 4.2%; Florida – 4.2%; Montana – 4.2%; Delaware – 4.1%; Maine – 4.1%; Tennessee – 4.1%; South Dakota – 4.0%; Nebraska – 3.9%; and Nevada – 3.9%.

## **RESEARCH:**

### **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA):**

Recently released NIDA funded research by Dr. Li-Tzy-Wu and colleagues (<http://www.drugabuse.gov/Newsroom/04/NR9-28.html>) yielded a number of significant findings:

Adolescents who reported first inhalant use at ages 13 to 14 were six times more likely to be dependent on inhalants than those who started using at ages 15 to 17;

Adolescents with a history of foster care placement were about five times more likely to become dependent on inhalants than those never placed away from home;

Adolescents who were treated for mental health problems were more than two times as likely to be dependent on inhalants; and

Adolescents who abuse or were dependent on two other drugs were also likely to use inhalants and were about four times more likely to be diagnosed with inhalant abuse and about nine times more likely to be diagnosed with inhalant dependence.

The study also reported that “boys were more likely to have ever used gasoline or nitrous oxide, while girls favored glue, shoe polish, spray paints, correction fluid and aerosol sprays.” It was also reported that about 60% of those adolescents who reported inhalant use in the past year also said that they used more than one type of inhalant.

Dr. Nora Volkow, NIDA Director, stated, “Our study provides more evidence that early use of inhalants may be a precursor for later drug abuse that grows to include abuse of multiple illegal substances.” Further, Dr. Volkow said, “Children and adolescents who abuse inhalants are at substantial risk of illness and death so it is important for prevention programs to target children when they are young.”

**COMMENT:** The NIDA research continues the call for early and aggressive inhalant abuse prevention efforts. It also highlights the need to target especially vulnerable populations such as youngsters in foster care and their caretakers. Early intervention through education and awareness can prevent early inhalant experimentation and potentially dire consequences. This could be an objective for those who will be participating in next year's NIPAW campaign.

## **NIPC GETS NEW POSTERS & A YOUTH MINI WEB SITE:**

We are proud to announce that new creative efforts have been donated to us by Memphis, TN based Red Deluxe advertising agency (<http://www.reddeluxe.com>). Red Deluxe is creating a youth-focused poster campaign (two posters) and a mini youth-focused web site as their participation in the national Create-A-Thon effort.

Create-A-Thon (<http://www.createathon.org/>) is a national program and a mechanism for participating advertising agencies to provide pro bono services to nonprofit organizations. This is a competitive process for nonprofits and it is our great honor to have been selected by this agency. After meeting with Red Deluxe principals, I know their work will contribute to our prevention efforts. We intend to include the new work as part of our NIPAW kits and the web site should be in place for the campaign – if not sooner.

**Comment:** Check the Create-A-Thon web site to see if there is a participating agency in your area. Next year you might be able to apply to the agency to obtain pro bono creative.

## **HUFFING AIR CONDITIONER REFRIGERANT – WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

We constantly hear reports of kids getting inside air conditioners to siphon off the refrigerant – often with tragic results (since our last UPDATE there were several fatality reports because of this practice). How can this be stopped?

Last month we received a call from Steve Brayley to say this is an industry concern and there is a solution – a tamperproof refrigerant locking cap. For more information please visit <http://www.noventcaps.com>

## **NEWS FROM STATE INHALANT COALITIONS:**

### **New England Inhalant Prevention Coalition:**

The CSAP funded New England Inhalant Abuse Prevention Coalition has the goal of reducing inhalant abuse by increasing the capacity of the New England states' prevention infrastructure to address this issue. The coalition has conducted meetings and held an inhalant summit for participating states. The coalition will be: supporting and partnering with efforts of Massachusetts Inhalant Abuse Task Force (MA Department of Public Health) and the NIPC to create two inhalant web-based trainings, one for parents and the other for youth-serving professionals; working with the State Fire Marshall's Office to update their Fire and Public Safety Curriculum Guide; and working to create inhalant abuse prevention task forces in Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Connecticut. The coalition, in cooperation with the NIPC, is planning an inhalant prevention and treatment institute to be held during the summer of 2005. For more project information contact Project Director Howard Wolfe at [hwolfe@inhalantprevention.org](mailto:hwolfe@inhalantprevention.org). Please contact Howard or me about your interest in participating in the inhalant institute.

### **New Mexico Inhalant Prevention Coalition:**

Over the past six months the New Mexico Inhalant Prevention Coalition was created and has taken shape with hard work and commitment from Joan Evans. Joni, a retired psychiatric nurse, is the grandmother of a girl who almost died from huffing. Joni has formed partnerships throughout the state to drive inhalant prevention messages. She has conducted workshop for educators, youths, parents, health professionals, etc. She has garnered support from Governor Richardson to advance her efforts. Brochures were printed and distributed and the media became a strong partner in her efforts. As one measure of the success of the New Mexico Coalition, it was able to reach over a half a million people through media driven awareness efforts. Those of you from New Mexico or those with New Mexico

colleagues who would like to join the coalition, please contact Joni Evans at [jonievans13@comcast.net](mailto:jonievans13@comcast.net) or me.

### **Wisconsin Inhalant Prevention Coalition:**

Several years ago the Wisconsin Inhalant Prevention Coalition was created. This started as a memorial and tribute to the life of Laurie Culp's son Aaron who died from huffing. The coalition has conducted statewide meetings to draw concerned organizations together and create partnerships to respond and act on the problem of inhalant abuse. Workshops have been held throughout the state. The coalition has advocated for Aaron's Law on the state level as a way to address inhalant abuse. Recently Sister Bay, WI adopted the law to lead the way for statewide legislation ([http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/news/archive/local\\_18064983.shtml](http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/news/archive/local_18064983.shtml)). Please contact the WI Coalition through there site at: <http://www.wisinalantprevention.com/> to learn more about them or contact me.

### **FAMILIES & FRIENDS OF INHALANT VICTIMS:**

#### **Advocacy Group Background:**

In previous NIPC **UPDATE's** we mentioned the idea of establishing a grassroots advocacy group to raise awareness about inhalants and provide family support for those who have lost a family member or friend to inhalants. This idea is coming to reality. A number of people who have lost children, family members and friends (as well as former abusers) who have been touched by inhalants have contacted us saying they want to be part of this effort (**note: for those who have contacted us about this, please confirm that we received your message**). One person has volunteered to chair the group and it looks like we may have some initial seed money to get this off the ground and for a first meeting. . Please contact me if you want to join in this effort – we will make a difference with this.

#### **Web Site Memorial Page:**

We would like to set up a web based memorial section on our web site. If you have placed information on the web about the death of a loved one or your personal story about your inhalant involvement, let us know and we will link to it.

#### **NEWS:**

#### **Diane Stem Selected for Statewide Recognition:**

Several years ago I received a call from Diane Stem from Tennessee – she just lost her son Ricky Jr. to huffing. Diane and her husband Ricky Sr., as so many other parents who have gone similar tragedies, were determined to speak out to save other parents and families the pain of this soul-numbing ordeal. Diane spoke at one of our first DC news conferences and she and Ricky Sr. speak to large and small groups throughout Tennessee. A year or so ago Diane had a career change and became a very successful realtor for Crye–Leike Realtors in TN.--- and her advocacy efforts continued. Because of her commitment and activities Diane was nominated for the “Good Neighbor” Award from the TN. Association of Realtors. About a month ago, in Memphis, Diane received the award – a cash award. What will Diane do with this? As a memorial to Ricky Jr. Diane will provide NIPAW local coordinator kits to schools and organizations throughout middle-Tennessee. To facilitate this effort we will be working with the TN Association of Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services and the TN Office of Safe & Drug Free Schools and Communities.

### **Remembering Jennifer:**

How time flies! It was ten years ago when a call came in from Susan Wilson-Tucker. Her daughter Jennifer recently died in a car crash. Jennifer was the passenger in the car. The driver was huffing. He survived. Susan was determined to make a difference in community, Clayton County, GA. ... and she did.

Inhalants were not a topic of concern in her area or in the state, for that matter. Susan decided to right the situation. Susan was able to get inhalant education information into County schools and add inhalant intoxication to Georgia’s DUI law (<http://www.news-daily.com/articles/2004/10/08/news/news2.txt> carries the full story).

Many of you may think Susan’s name sounds familiar. For those who received SC Johnson’s “EDUCATE” video from us (we’ve distributed over 36,000 of them at no cost) will recall that Susan and Jennifer’s story is featured in it ... and Susan’s elegant and haunting words about this tragedy.

### **NIPAW:**

March 20<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005, is the 13<sup>th</sup> annual **National Inhalants & Poisons Awareness Week (NIPAW)** campaign – mark your calendars, spread the word to

colleagues and make sure that NIPAW is noted on calendars and in newsletters of associations you are involved with. Participation in this year's campaign is critical; working together we can change and reverse current trends of increased inhalant use. Local coordinator's kits should be available in January. In December we will go out with a promotional mailing to the over 73,000 people on our mailing list (the NIPC UPDATE reaches over 5,000 folks). As in the past, NIPAW will be kicked-off with a Washington, DC, **news conference** at the National Press Club on March 17<sup>th</sup>. This has always been a great opportunity for local tie-ins to the National event

The NIPAW campaign provides resources to support modest and large efforts to raise awareness and educate communities about the dangers of inhalants and potential consequences of using them. In the past, education & awareness efforts have ranged from a single classroom, faith group, scout group, extension service, etc. to system-wide, community-wide and state-wide efforts. All it takes is a single person to get this started. Now more than ever, each of us can and will make a difference.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

To improve our services and have a better understanding of your needs, we would appreciate it if you would answer a couple of questions and get back to us with your comments. We asked similar questions last year and your responses helped us with the redesign of our web site.

**Have you found our web site useful and user friendly?**

**Suggestions for any changes?**

**For those of you who have received our materials and resources, have they met your needs? Did they get to you timely?**

**How else can we better serve you?**

**Besides the NIPC, where else do you go for your inhalant information?**

**Considering all of the resources you have tapped, what gaps do you see?**

**What inhalant treatment facilities are you aware of?**

Thank you for taking the time to respond so we can better meet your needs.

## **NIPC SUPPORT:**

### **Urgent Appeal:**

Unfortunately our current funding has been reduced by about 40%. This has not deterred us from continuing our services at the same level as in the past. We continue to supply resources (sent 1<sup>st</sup> class or priority mail), at no cost, to all who contact us and we continue to maintain our toll free telephone lines. If you have ever thought about making a contribution to us, now is the time. As the year draws to a close many people consider making tax-deductible charitable contributions to worthy organizations – we hope you consider us at this time. Those of you who have received our materials at no cost, please consider making a contribution to us (the expenses for video dubbing, CD copying, brochures and mailing as well as our toll free phone service, among other things, come from my own pocket because we have no budget for this). The NIPC is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit corporation. **Help us continue to help others by making a contribution to *Synergies*. Mail to: NIPC/Synergies, 2904 Kerbey Lane, Austin, TX 78703.**

### **Helping Others:**

Speaking of donations, though not related to us (and off message) but something I do personally. I would like to suggest a way of making a difference in the lives of people in your community. Many of us travel about the country. Most motels & hotels give us those “lovely” little bathroom items, soap, shampoo, etc., that we use and other times don’t. Items that go unopened I collect (I must admit I cheat a bit and gather these items daily so the hotel has to replenish the supply daily) and donate them to a women’s shelter, Room at the Inn, in Chattanooga, TN. I know these basics of life are much appreciated. Think about doing the same in your community – if you do not have a place to donate these items, just send them to me. I’ll see to it that they make their way to people who will use them. So many things we take for granted can make quite a difference in the lives of others.

## **End Notes:**

The year is rapidly coming to a close and holidays will be upon us. Moments of joy, thanksgiving and reflection are part of our lives during this time. For me the past year brimmed over with much joy and accomplishment coupled with a couple

of devastating losses. For so many I have talked with over the years, during this season, there is an emptiness and the knowledge of unfulfilled dreams – unknown and unbridled potential lost when a loved one made a choice that shatters and destroys expectations for the future. I mentioned but a few in this message: Johnson, David, Ricky Jr., Jennifer, Aaron. It almost seems as if in death each of these young men and women have been given a voice to speak of the unintended consequences of choices and warn of dangerous choices. I could go on and speak at length about so many but I will let the parent of one speak of his reflections of his son David. After I sign off on this, as a postscript, there will be a note I received from Kim Manlove about his son.

So, as the holidays come, my wish for each of you is: May your life be filled with unexpected joys and love ... received and given.

Harvey

PS: From Kim Manlove about his son David:

The next time you are in New York City my wife and I would like to invite you to stop in and see our son. He hangs out in a gallery just off One Times Square between West 46th and 47th Streets and would welcome a visit. His name is David and he's a handsome boy, not very tall at 5'8", but with incredible hazel eyes and a smile that will melt your heart. You'll enjoy meeting him and learning about his dreams and the things that are important to a boy his age. He wants to be an orthopedic surgeon like his grandfather. He loves baseball, has played catcher ever since he was in Pee Wee Little League and even started a few times on his high school team. And he's a big fan of Rap music too, Snoop Dog, Master P, Tupac, all fill his world with the rebelliousness and passion he shares with all sixteen year olds.

Sixteen you say ... Hmmmm ... kind of young to be hanging out in a place like the Big Apple especially in Times Square in the heart of Manhattan.

And of course you are absolutely right. You see his mother and I never wanted him to go there ... not like this. We worked very hard to try and prevent him from making the decision that led him there. We worked with his friends from childhood, his girlfriend and even sought professional help, but in the end it was his decision, one that he made alone, knowing full well what the consequences could be. A decision that was made with the surety of life as seen through the eyes of a 16 year-old, where bad things only happen to other people.

He drowned that warm sunny day in June 2001 getting high after inhaling the propellant from a can of computer duster. The poison in the propellant froze his heart and lungs and though they quickly pulled him from the pool, it was too late.

And now there his pictures are today, in that store front off of Times Square, part of the Drug Enforcement Agency's Lost Talent section of the "Target America: Drug Traffickers, Terrorists and You" traveling exhibit. Originally the "Lost Talent" section was to feature pictures only of famous people from film, art and music who have been lost to drug abuse.

Fortunately somewhere along the way a great idea got better when the decision was made to include unknown people like Dave whose lost talent and potential has been devastating, not only to his family and friends, but to our society at large.

Two weeks before Dave died my wife asked him, in the midst of his struggle with addiction, what he wanted to do with his life? And with all the passion and sincerity that only those hazel eyes and that warm smile could radiate he said to her, "I want to make a difference in this world with my life."

And so you have my son ... and so you have.

DEA Museum <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/deamuseum/website/features.html>