

Chalkboard

By

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There was an encouraging yet alarming article in last Sunday's Benton County Record (['Back From The Brink'](#), *Opinion* Section- Tracy M. Neal, Reporter) regarding Benton County's juvenile drug court. The encouraging part dealt with the success in combating drug use among 30 to 40 juveniles who were in the program.

The disturbing part can be gleaned from a statistic quoted in the article which reads, "Last year, the county's juvenile office handled 1,100 delinquency or family-in-need-of-services cases. Eighty to 90 percent of those cases involved drugs, according to Petie Cobb, director of the local juvenile probation office. 'Believe it or not, it's rare to have someone not experienced with drugs,' Cobb said."

I calculated that to mean between 880 and 990 teenagers and/or their family members to have problems with illicit drug use. Looking at enrollment numbers for students in Benton County in grades 6-12 would indicate that about 16,500 students fall in that range. That would be about 6% then that the county sees with drug-related problems. Careful consideration might lead one to hypothesize that many problems never make it to the county level but I have no data to support that line of thought. I can support the idea that even one child is one too many.

The article outlined some reasons why the program is successful. I quote again, "They are drug-tested twice a week and attend counseling sessions — individual, group and family — nine hours a week. They report to a probation officer, and their behavior at home and school is monitored. They are also expected to remain clean and sober and maintain good grades.

The family involvement is what makes the juvenile drug court unique, according to officials. The officials were told in the training stages that it's impossible to have a successful juvenile drug court without parental involvement, said Finch, who presides over the court."

I offer all the above to remind you that you have an opportunity to be involved with your school in combating the problem. For many years, our policy in this matter has offered parents an opportunity to have their child included within the pool of students from which a number are randomly drawn periodically for drug testing.

Our policy states, “All students in grades 7 through 12 who voluntarily participate in any activity sanctioned by the Arkansas Activities Association will participate in a random drug testing program.

On written request any parent, having a child in grades 7 to 12 who is less than eighteen years of age, may voluntarily choose to include their child in the random screening pool regardless of the child’s involvement in extra-curricular activities.

On written request, any student being eighteen years of age or older, may voluntarily choose to be included in the random screening pool.”

I encourage you to read the complete policy on our school web site at <http://www.gentrypioneers.com/admin/policies/0506districtparentstudent.pdf>. It is entitled “Chemical Screening Policy For Students In Extra-Curricular Activities.”

Most of all I would encourage you to sign your child up to be in the group from which the names will be drawn. This policy is not punitive in nature. The policy reads, “The parent and student will be notified of the positive test. The principal will not inform anyone but the parent and the student.”

If your child, who you place in the pool, tests positive the consequence is you are made aware of that fact. That’s it. At that point, the responsibility lies with whom it should- you, the parent, and your child.