

Above the Influence

By Alexa Wainwright and Nancy Young

Above the influence (ATI 802) is a group at the Brattleboro Union High School, supported by the Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition (BAPC), whose main focus is to encourage students to stay away from anything that will change or influence them in a negative way. To us, being a part of this group means making an impact on people and getting them to think about their choices before they make them. Since we have joined this group, we have participated in a lot of activities, such as; a school wide dodge ball game that ATI 802 hosted with BUHS's sports marketing class, Kick Butts Day (a day dedicated to making people aware about the negative effects of tobacco) and an awesome poster campaign. The campaign allowed a few members of ATI 802 to have their photographs on a poster that stated something they were above the influence of and some activities that they were a part of in the community. The posters were, and still are, hung all around BUHS and stores in the Brattleboro area. Check out the ATI802.com to see our campaign. Our most recent activity was a community conversation that ATI 802 hosted with Brattleboro Area Prevention Collation. The main focus of the community conversation was the misuse of prescription drugs by teenagers, why it happens and how to prevent it from happening. Many people from the community showed up to this event, including a state trooper, a few pharmacists and doctors, a lot of teens, and some of the faculty members of BUHS. The outcome of the conversation was more than we expected. It was truly an eye opening experience for a lot of people that showed up including ourselves.

We have been in this group for over a year now and it has helped us stay away from negative influences and it has made it possible for us to get the word out to other teens that there are always better, more positive things to do in the community, and that they don't have to turn to drugs for something to do. There is never a time where we don't feel our hard work pay off in this group! ATI 802 recently won an award for Peer Prevention Champions of 2014 at the Vermont State House from Prevention Works VT!. A few ATI 802 members got to take a trip to Montpelier to accept this award. We are truly grateful that we got to be part of the group who went to receive this award. It was an awesome experience and we got to meet other prevention groups from the state to swap ideas and congratulate each other for all of our hard work. We are especially grateful for the amazing adults at BUHS and BAPC for guiding us through our projects and helping make them possible! Thank you to Maryann Kinney and Linda Heimerdinger BUHS advisors and Shannon Albritton from BAPC. We are very proud of our group for winning the award and for all the hard work that they put in to the projects we decide to do. We really hope that ATI 802 continues to grow even after we graduate at the end of next year because it is a great group to be involved in during your high school career and we really think it helps people stay above the influence!

Alexa Wainwright and Nancy Young are juniors at Brattleboro Union High School and active leaders in ATI 802. They have contributed this column as guest writers for the Brattleboro Area Prevention

Coalition; a local nonprofit that organizes community efforts to be involved in the ongoing prevention and reduction of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in the Windham Southeast area. The coalition meets in Brattleboro on the second Friday of each month at 12pm; lunch is provided and all are welcome. Visit www.BrattleboroAreaPreventionCoalition.org or call 802.257.2175 to learn more about their prevention efforts and to get involved. Visit ATI802.com to learn more.