

Healthy Living Youth Council Member of the Month: Introducing Nadia Karmali

Alcohol abuse prevention project a model for school partnerships

Since the [Healthy Living Youth Council](#) (HLYC) first came together in November 2012, the 17 members have been hard at work in their school communities. This month, DASH is profiling Nadia Karmali, a Grade 11 student at [Dr. Charles Best Secondary School](#) in Coquitlam. We interviewed Nadia to learn more about her interest in health, school connectedness, and alcohol abuse. Needless to say, Nadia is a highly dedicated HLYC member who is passionate about healthy schools and healthy students.

What does health mean to you?

“It’s not just being active physically, but emotionally and spiritually too...and being mentally healthy.”

What can a healthy school community look like to you?

“Seeing everyone in my school getting active and being involved in the community. Students trying to get active and make healthier life choices like not smoking. Getting everyone involved as one community, so that you’re all interconnected. You can all talk to each other about how you feel. Having support groups in your school so you feel connected.”

Nadia’s Project: Peer-to-Peer Support to Reduce Alcohol Abuse

A proud member of the HLYC, Nadia has demonstrated leadership skills and collaborated with a group of over 25 students at her school to address alcohol abuse. The group is passionate about creating opportunities for peer-to-peer support, and is particularly interested in targeting the transition into middle school which they have identified as being an especially important time. Supported by Nadia’s HLYC Teacher Mentor, Ms. Howell, and the school principal, Ms. O’Neill, Nadia and the group began to organize and plan a multi-faceted campaign in January 2013, with the goal of preventing alcohol abuse at an early age.

The group is collaborating with drama students to develop skits demonstrating the harmful effects of alcohol abuse. They are also planning to deliver peer-to-peer workshops to middle schools in their school district; these workshops will showcase the skits and provide a platform for small group discussions led by Nadia and her peers. Topics and questions that will be covered during these workshops include: symptoms of alcohol abuse; how to avoid certain situations related to drinking; “What happens if your friend drinks too much?” and “What happens if you find a friend unconscious?”

Nadia and the group are also collaborating with their school counsellors. A group of students will receive training to become peer counsellors who will support their fellow students in a variety of ways. The school counsellors have also offered to supervise an online chat line which will provide students with an avenue to discuss alcohol abuse in a safe and anonymous setting led by youth for youth.

In addition to all of this, the group is also hoping to engage parents in discussions around alcohol abuse. They are planning to provide an opportunity for students to speak about alcohol and discuss ways that parents can support their children.

As the year progresses, we will be learning more about Nadia's project and will also showcase more of the inspiring work being done by her fellow HLYC members.

Are you a teacher who knows a student doing great things in your school? We want to hear from you! Contact DASH [here](#) to learn more.