

# neighbors

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3 EAST



## SOAPBOX

### Let's duplicate anti-drug initiative

In response to *Students say peer groups more effective* [March 9], Gulliver Prep's initiative to open dialogue among teens regarding important issues, such as substance abuse is a step that more schools need to take.

However, the problem of teen drug use should also be discussed and understood as a symptom and not a cause of other factors. Experts in the field of adolescent drug use observe that "adolescent angst" or inner emptiness can be expressed in many ways including low self-esteem and drug use.

In spite of increasing attention given to this phenomenon by the media, government, and health professionals, widespread misuse and abuse of drugs and alcohol by teens has persisted virtually unabated because current efforts at drug prevention are misguided to the extent they focus on symptoms and nothing else.

Parents and educators need to be aware that many of the factors known to be associated with teen substance abuse including poor academic performance, rebelliousness, delinquency, as well as low self-esteem and depression, all precede rather than follow the initiation of substance abuse.

Experts suggest that current drug education may be addressed more successfully by efforts aimed at encouraging sensitive and empathetic parenting, at building childhood self-esteem, at fostering sounder interpersonal relationships and promoting involvement and commitment to meaningful life goals.

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