



VERNON
ROCKS
COALITION

The mission of the **Vernon ROCKS Coalition** is to provide **Resources & Outreach for Community Knowledge & Success** to prevent youth substance abuse.

Vernon ROCKS is a collaboration of community stakeholders, parents, youth, and volunteers, whose focus is to prevent the use of drugs and alcohol in Vernon's youth by promoting protective factors and decreasing risk factors that contribute to substance use.



During National Prevention Week in May, Real Talk members set up a table outside of the cafeteria to raise awareness about prevention and to recruit new Real Talk members for the upcoming school year!

Dear Vernon ROCKS Members and Partners,

During the past year, Vernon ROCKS gained even more visibility within our community. We increased our recognition by attending community events, being an active voice on social media and involving young people in our work. We are thrilled that more than 10 young people joined our Coalition in the past year. With their hard work and dedication, we launched the Real Talk campaign, which was widely disseminated throughout the community. With the goal of preventing youth substance use, the campaign used creative and attention-grabbing messages to encourage parents of young people to nurture positive family norms and included peer-to-peer messages to promote healthy decision making for Vernon's youth. The campaign also provided our Real Talk members with a platform to be seen as leaders in our community.

The progress we made through the implementation of the Strategic Prevention Framework, through the first three years of our Partnership for Success grant, was significant. We are looking forward to reviewing the new student survey data results to create new programs and activities based on the needs of our community. We are excited to continue our growth with potential new funding streams that will enhance our capacity and increase our partnerships.

We want to thank all of our members and partners for their instrumental efforts to support our mission. We truly can't be successful without the group effort our Coalition puts forth.

Thank you!



Michelle Hill
Coalition Chairperson



Kaitlin Carafa
Coalition Coordinator



Real Talk Campaign

The Real Talk campaign was created by a group of local teens for teens and parents to start conversations about underage drinking. Real Talk hopes to change the social norms and attitudes around underage drinking.



July-August

Youth met weekly with Vernon ROCKS and The Village staff to learn about different types of campaigns and brainstorm campaign names and logos.



Adelaide, Amani, and Aiman helping to craft the Real Talk logo

A billboard for the Real Talk campaign. On the left is a photo of a young woman. To the right is a blue box with white text: "MOST LIKELY TO..." followed by a checklist. The first item is "Get home safe" with a checked box, and the second is "Lose their driver's license" with an unchecked box. Below this is the slogan "The choice is yours." and the website "vernonrocksct.org/realtalk". The Real Talk VERNON logo is in the bottom right corner.

MOST LIKELY TO...

- Get home safe
- Lose their driver's license

The choice is yours.
vernonrocksct.org/realtalk

real talk
VERNON

Endorsed by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, through the Partnership for Success 2015 grant from the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse & Prevention.

September-October

Youth drilled down into messaging, landing on a yearbook theme for teens and a New Year's resolution theme for parents.

November

Youth raised awareness about the campaign by wearing Real Talk shirts to school, and the first billboard was displayed featuring a peer message for teens.



Carl, Emily, Amani, Skylar, and Georgiette who wore their shirts to school together

December

The second billboard featuring a timely New Year's resolution for parents was displayed through January.

The youth group presented the campaign to the Board of Education and the Town Council.



Anatol, Emily, Tiffany, Amani, Georgiette, Aiman, Skylar, Angie and Carl at the Board of Education meeting



Real Talk/Vernon ROCKS received a training certificate of completion from Community Voice Channel.



The first episode of "Real Talk Interviews" featured Coalition chairperson, Michelle Hill, and Real Talk host, Skylar.

January

Posters with Real Talk messages were hung in the high school and middle school, liquor stores, and popular businesses around town. The first episode of "Real Talk Interviews" was filmed and aired on the Community Voice Channel. Subsequent episodes were aired Tuesdays at 6:00pm throughout the months of February-April.

We were thrilled that the Hartford Courant featured an article about Real Talk!

Facebook and Instagram ads were created to target teens and their parents.

April

The Real Talk campaign continued with a new billboard featuring messaging to coincide with Junior & Senior Proms, and stickers with safe prom messages were placed on floral purchases for prom-goers.



PROM-ise
to keep kids safe during prom weekend.

Set rules. Know who's driving.
Chaperone parties.
Talk to other parents.
vernonrocksct.org/realtalk



Powered by the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicle Services, through the Partnership for Safer Roads 2015 grant from the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse & Prevention.

Coalition Member of the Year

Each year, Coalition members have an opportunity to recognize one of their peers from the Coalition who goes above and beyond to support their work. The Coalition Member of the Year continuously promotes the mission of Vernon ROCKS and shows a strong desire to protect and promote the young people of Vernon.

Phil Bunick

Retired Pharmacist and
Community Volunteer

“Phil always takes an approach to substance abuse prevention that is based in science and evidence, which is something the Coalition stresses. His background as a pharmacist provides the Coalition with a unique perspective. He is always eager to provide more information for all of us, whether it be in a full presentation or a simple email with a link to an interesting article. If there is ever a need for a volunteer we can count on Phil, as he is eager to help. At community events, I have seen Phil interact and connect with diverse groups of people, treating everyone with the same respect and dignity. Furthermore, he sits on multiple sub-committees and actively voices his opinion during meetings, leading us to a greater, richer discussion. In general, you can always turn to Phil at any Coalition function and see him smiling and laughing. His positivity brings warmth and compassion to what can sometimes be an uncomfortable or disheartening topic.”




What does it mean to you to be chosen as the Coalition member of the year?


Being chosen as the “Coalition Member of the Year” comes as quite a surprise to me. My goal when I became a member of the Coalition was (and still is) to do whatever I could to be helpful to the Coalition in achieving their goal of reducing the incidence of substance abuse in town. It certainly feels good to me to know that I have been successful in achieving that goal.

What made you get involved in the Coalition?

I first became aware of the Coalition while attending a community drug awareness program at the High School a couple of years ago. Spending my career as a pharmacist made me acutely aware of the benefits that opioid pain medicines afford patients in relieving their pain and suffering. Conversely, I have seen the terrible impact these drugs cause when used indiscriminately and inappropriately. I was pleased to see that our community had assembled a group of dedicated people as part of the Vernon ROCKS Coalition with the purpose of countering the issues of drug, alcohol and even nicotine abuse amongst the youth in town.



I have seen Phil interact and connect with diverse groups of people, treating everyone with the same respect and dignity.



Senior Recognition

Congratulations to our Coalition members who are graduating from Rockville High School this year! These industrious youth spent more than 50 hours engaging in Vernon ROCKS meetings, events and activities over the past year. We are grateful for their commitment and the positive example they set for their peers every day.

Skylar

Coalition Member Since: June 2018

College: Attending Coastal Carolina in the fall.

What does being part of Real Talk mean to you?

“Real Talk is making a difference in the community and working with great people to achieve that goal. I get excited every time we have a meeting, even if it’s about the little things. Working on this campaign not only broadened my understanding of our community, but of myself. It’s a rewarding feeling knowing that you possess the ability to influence something that so many people get to see. Even if all of this only affects one person, that person would make it all worth it.”



Carl

Coalition Member Since: June 2018

College: Attending Dartmouth

What does being part of Real Talk mean to you?

“Through Real Talk, I feel as though I can help make a positive mark on the town, school, and community. I believe that Real Talk is a method in which we shine light about what is great about Vernon, and what needs to change about it. I hope that we can create a positive reputation for Vernon, and create a place where the youth of the town are set up to succeed.”



We are so proud of you, Skylar and Carl!

Congratulations!

At a Glance



154 lbs

of medication collected and disposed of at 2 DEA Drug Take Back events



854

Surveys collected

(766 RHS students, 11 Coalition members, 25 18-25 year olds & 52 community members)



15+

Events attended

6

Events held

Social Media Growth July 2018 - May 2019



163

new Facebook followers



25

new Twitter followers

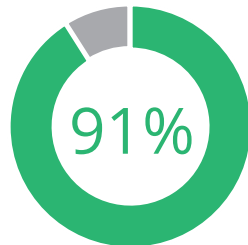


42

new Instagram followers



The majority of Coalition members believe that the Coalition has increased relationships and knowledge within the community.



of Coalition members believe we create community changes.

Thank you, Vernon ROCKS Coalition Members!

Vernon ROCKS engages a diverse group of community stakeholders, parents, youth, and volunteers from all corners of our community. It is only through our unified action that we can prevent youth substance use by promoting protective factors and reducing risk factors. We are proud of our collaboration, our work, and our accomplishments!

Member/Partner Organizations:

- Vernon Police Department
- North Central District Health Department
- Vernon Family School & Community Partnerships
- Vernon Public Schools
- Town of Vernon
- Vernon Youth Services Bureau
- KIDSAFE CT
- The Village for Families & Children
- Become Part of the Solution
- Hockanum Valley Community Council (HVCC)
- Natchaug Hospital – RiverEast Treatment Center
- Vernon Community Network
- ERASE
- Community Health Resources
- Community Voice Channel
- Rockville Pharmacy
- Walgreens
- Vernon Parks & Recreation
- Climb Medical, LLC
- NAFI
- Crossroads Community Church
- Youth Members
- Volunteers

Special thanks to our funders and sponsors:

- DMHAS
- AmeriCorps VISTA

Welcome New 2018-2019 Coalition Members/Partners:

- Community Health Resources - Katie Fontaine
- Community Voice Channel
- Crossroads Community Church – Elizabeth Osterday
- Climb Medical, LLC – Dr. Chad McDonald
- NAFI – Dana Kukucka

Events and Activities

Vernon ROCKS was busy this past year! Coalition members were out and about hosting and attending events, spreading our message of prevention, promoting protective factors by connecting teens to healthy alternatives, and providing education and resources to the community. Here are a few highlights...

Second Annual Vernon ROCKS Community Basketball Tournament

Fifteen Coalition members – five adults and 10 youth – helped to make the basketball tournament a success! A total of 40 students, police officers and Rockville High School staff participated in the tournament with another 30 students cheering in the stands.



Real Talk members Amani, Angie and Emily volunteering at the 2nd Annual B-Ball Tournament.



Real Talk members Georgiette and Tiffany keeping score at the tournament!



Coalition member, Officer Wells, showing off his referee skills at the tournament!

We hope to change the social norms around underage drinking and remind teens that they don't need to feel pressured to participate if they are put in a situation where there is drinking

Michelle Hill in Hartford Courant's Jan 10th 2019 article, "Real Talk Takes Aim At Underage Drinking"

Rockville ROCKS!

On May 18th, we hosted our second annual Rockville ROCKS Community Block Party! In recognition of National Prevention Week, the block party provided Vernon residents with resources and information about services and organizations in the community that are available for them and their families. There were over 15 resource tables focusing on health, well-being and substance use. Popular activities included a youth-created, vape-themed escape room called "Escape the Vape"; K-9 demonstration; Hidden in Plain Sight demonstration, music and much more! Rockville ROCKS drew in a huge crowd with 300 community members present on a beautiful spring day!



Mayor Dan Champagne has been so supportive of the Coalition! At our Rockville ROCKS Block Party, he even took the time to take a picture with Coalition coordinator, Kaitlin Carafa, and Coalition chairperson, Michelle Hill!



We were so pleased with the number of community partners that came out to share resources at the block party!



Real Talk members Emily and Georgiette recruiting community members to follow us on social media at the Block Party!

Narcan Training

More than 20 community members attended our Opioid Overdose Reversal/Naloxone (Narcan) Administration training at the library in April. This training sparked a new partnership with Climb Medical, LLC – a substance abuse treatment practice in South Windsor. All participants went home with a free, no questions asked Narcan kit.

Dr. Chad McDonald did an awesome job explaining what Naloxone is, how it can be administered and what treatment options are available to opioid users that are seeking help.





Join us!





We can overcome challenges in Vernon by uniting as a community to protect Vernon youth, provide them with healthy alternatives and educate everyone on the dangers and risks of alcohol and prescription drug use. Members of our Coalition are representatives from all sectors of the community, and each sector plays an important role in our work. Whether you're a representative from a family, faith-based group or business community - or if you are just a concerned citizen - you can help us ensure all Vernon youth have the opportunity to lead a successful life.

As a Vernon ROCKS member you will:

- Attend meetings to stay up-to-date on current topics and trends affecting Vernon youth
- Help to make decisions about strategies and activities to implement in the community
- Volunteer your time and/or resources at community events to raise awareness of the Coalition, the program and the drug use concerns that exist in our community



Connect with us

-  vernonrocksct.org
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-  instagram.com/VernonROCKSct

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