

A Campus Community Coalition

GTsmart Report

January 2007 Volume 4 : Issue 1

GT SMART Adds a New Dimension to Efforts

GT SMART is currently developing programming for parents to help them better understand today's campus culture and to assist in identifying methods for talking to their children to better prepare them for the risks in today's society, often which seem to harmlessly begin with alcohol.

On campus, GT SMART has brought together a broad range of departments to discuss the alcohol awareness and prevention programs they use. These

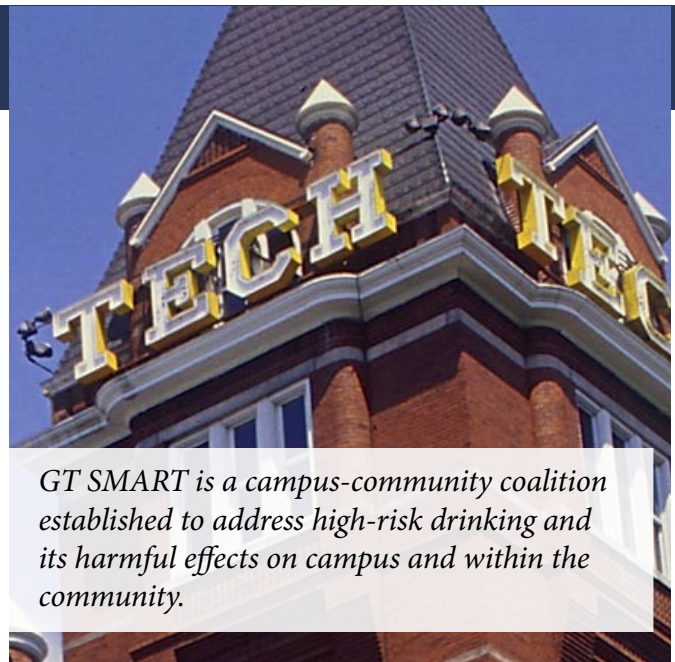
GT SMART Announcements

Emergency Wallet Cards

6000 GT SMART Emergency Wallet Cards will be distributed to campus housing residents through the new BuzzBags service offered by Auxiliary Services on January 22nd. Please email gtsmart@vpss.gatech.edu or call 404-385-1396 to order emergency wallet cards. Or download a printable PDF copy on the [GT SMART website](#).

Ad Campaign playing in Student Center

GT SMART's humorous ad campaign that targets



GT SMART is a campus-community coalition established to address high-risk drinking and its harmful effects on campus and within the community.

meetings resulted in the formation of a Campus Alcohol Taskforce with the goal of developing a strategic plan for proactive programming and an Alcohol Committee charged with developing and implementing new initiatives to better address alcohol issues on campus.

We are working effectively to provide tools by focusing our efforts on creating strategies to change the environment that passively permits or actively encourages high-risk drinking. ■

binge drinking will run on the plasma screens in the Student Center for the next several weeks. The first ad featured will be "First Date". To view both ads visit the [GT SMART website](#).

GT SMART Receives Honor

An honor was recently bestowed upon the GT SMART Program. Marsha Brinkley, Program Director for GT SMART was invited to be part of a roundtable discussion on the issue of high-risk drinking at Harris Manchester College of Oxford University. ■

‘Drinko’: Anatomy of an Advocacy Campaign

This news story was provided by Join Together, www.jointogether.org, a project of Boston University School of Public Health. By Bob Curley.

January 12, 2007 - In just a few short weeks, an advocacy campaign spearheaded by local prevention coalitions like the Oregon Partnership and coordinated by groups like Join Together, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), and Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) succeeded in getting three of America’s top retailers to stop selling a series of games that critics say promote binge and underage drinking.

In mid-December 2006, Kentucky Crime Prevention Coalition Director Bob Douglas learned that Kohl’s department stores in the Cincinnati area were selling at least five different drinking games, including “Drinko,” a version of the TV game show “Plinko,” and games that combined drinking with ping-pong, roulette, and darts.

The Kentucky coalition began sending e-mails to Kohl’s officials and also put in a call to the local media; the Kentucky Post ran a story on the controversy on Dec. 12, 2006.

Douglas also contacted George Hacker of CSPI’s Alcohol Polices Project in Washington, D.C., and Hacker, in turn, sent out a national “action alert” urging advocates to contact Kohl’s and ask the company to stop selling the drinking games. The action alert reached Eric Helmuth at Join Together, who offered to circulate the CSPI alert via Join Together’s extensive e-mail list of addiction prevention and treatment leaders

and organizations.

Many of the games targeted by the campaign, such as “Shots and Ladders” and “Beer Pong,” are commercially-produced versions of drinking games already popular on college campuses and among high-school students, noted Helmuth, director of technology and online communications for Join Together. “For a manufacturer or retailer to claim that these boxed games are meant only to appeal to over-21 adults is simply disingenuous,” he said.

Soon, both national groups like CADCA and local organizations like Oregon Partnership were adding their voices and resources to the campaign, including through a sample letter forwarded to advocates. “Intentionally or not, these youth-centered games promote underage and high-risk drinking,” the Kohl’s alert noted. “They have no place in a family department store, especially during the holiday season. Tell Kohl’s president Kevin Mansell that binge drinking is no laughing matter. Insist he remove these irresponsible products from store shelves and online.”

Letters Spark Swift Action

Within three days of Join Together sending out its first message about Kohl’s on Dec. 19, the company wrote back to advocates promising to stop selling the games. “Be assured that the remaining games are being removed from all Kohl’s stores and online,” wrote Kohl’s

[‘Drinko’: Anatomy of an Advocacy Campaign](#)
[Continued Page 3 >>](#)

Continued - ‘Drinko’: Anatomy of an Advocacy Campaign

spokesperson Julie Landro. All in all, the campaign generated more than 2,800 letters to Kohl’s, said Helmuth.

Attention then shifted to Target, another retailer selling drinking games online and in its retail stores. Again, events moved swiftly: a Join Together action alert generated more than 2,100 letters to Target (despite the campaign being launched the week before Christmas), and by Jan. 10 Target was writing to activists, “Thanks for taking the time to share your thoughts and feelings about the game ‘Drinko.’ This product isn’t sold in Target stores and is no longer available on our web site at Target.com. We apologize for any offense or disappointment this product may have caused.”

With two victories in hand, advocates turned to a third retailer found to be selling the games: Linens ‘n Things. The campaign targeting this company was launched Jan. 10, the same day that USA Today published the first national newspaper story detailing the campaigns against the three retailers.

The next day -- and after receiving more than 1,600 letters from prevention advocates -- Linens ‘n Things spokesperson Toni Vardiman responded, “Although these games are marketed to the adult population and are not meant to promote irresponsible drinking or consumption of alcohol; we appreciate your comments and are accordingly removing these items from our

shelves and on our website.”

On Jan. 12, Vardiman wrote to Join Together to add: “As of this morning, all stores have complied and the product is no longer available on the website. Thank you for creating such awareness and bringing this matter to our attention.”

To read the rest of the article visit the Join Together website at: <http://www.jointogether.org/news/features/2007/drinko-anatomy-of-an.html>. ■