



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

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News Release

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UTD to Host Free Community Forum With Collin County Substance Abuse Coalition

Parents Encouraged to Attend April 2 Event, Learn About Teen Drug Use

RICHARDSON, Texas (March 21, 2006) — In response to a growing number of overdoses and deaths in Collin County due to heroin and methamphetamine use, The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), in partnership with the Collin County Substance Abuse Coalition, will host a free community forum about teen drug abuse beginning at 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 2 in the university's Activity Center. Dr. Darrelene Rachavong, UTD's vice president for student affairs, will give opening remarks at the event.

Experts from the coalition will discuss the latest trends in drug use and advise parents and others about how to recognize drugs, drug paraphernalia and changes in a teen's behavior that may indicate drug use. Participants will include members of Collin county law enforcement agencies, educators, substance abuse professionals and recovering youths and their parents.

UTD also will sponsor an appearance at the event by the "Drug Bug," which is a Volkswagen Beetle set up to demonstrate where and how teens hide drugs and paraphernalia in automobiles. Forum speakers will include Sabina Stern of the Collin County Substance Abuse Program, Gayle Jensen-Savoie of Presbyterian Hospital of Plano and Courtney Pero, a detective with the Plano Police Department's narcotics division.

"The coalition believes it is vitally important to educate parents and young people about the warning signs and things to look for that might indicate their son, daughter or friend is hiding or fighting drug addiction," said Steve Finney, a narcotics detective with the UTD Police Department and member of the coalition. "If this forum helps at least one family discover or cope with addiction, we consider it a success — we're here to save lives."

The Collin County Substance Abuse Coalition is a task force of various government and nonprofit agencies and groups from Allen, Frisco, Plano and Richardson that includes police, substance abuse groups, school counselors and healthcare and treatment programs. The mission of the coalition is to monitor and reduce the incidence of illness, injury and death among teenagers and young adults caused by substance abuse.

This is the third event the coalition has organized. The first was in Allen last October, and the next forum will take place in Frisco in May. Parents and families are encouraged to attend, but seating is limited.

The agenda for the UTD forum is as follows:

5-5:30 p.m. — Open Displays of Drugs and Drug Paraphernalia, Drug Bug Presentation

5:30-5:45 — Welcome and Introduction: Darrelene Rachavong, UTD; Sabina Stern, Collin County Substance Abuse Program; Gayle Jensen-Savoie, Presbyterian Hospital of Plano

5:45-6:15 — Law Enforcement Drug Identification Presentation: Courtney Pero, Plano Police Department

6:15-6:45 — Speakers: Recovering Teens and their Parents

6:45-7:30 — Question and Answer Session

About UTD

The University of Texas at Dallas, located at the convergence of Richardson, Plano and Dallas in the heart of the complex of major multinational technology corporations known as the Telecom Corridor®, enrolls nearly 14,500 students. The school's freshman class traditionally stands at the forefront of Texas state universities in terms of average SAT scores. The university offers a broad assortment of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs. For additional information about UTD, please visit the university's website at www.utdallas.edu.

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