

# I'M ALLERGIC TO STUPID DECISIONS:

## A youth-driven testing program to support healthy decisions



**G. Rots<sup>2,3</sup>, L.S. Suggs<sup>1,4</sup> ,  
J. Jacques<sup>2</sup>, H. Vong<sup>2</sup>, J. Mui<sup>2</sup>,  
B. Reardon<sup>2</sup>, Team TADD<sup>2</sup>**

- 1- University of Lugano, Lugano Switzerland
- 2- Team TADD south, Medford Massachusetts, USA
- 3- City of Cambridge, Prevention Programming, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
- 4- Health X Change, USA

# What is I'm Allergic to Stupid Decisions?

- Provides teens with support for making healthy decisions
- Driven by a good Social Marketing Plan
- Based on survey and focus group data
- Delivered through SMS (text messages)
- Created by youth, for youth (Team TADD south)
- Supported by adult advisors (Rots, Suggs, Kelley, Jacques)
- Financially support by local public health office

# Objectives

- To develop, implement and evaluate a social marketing campaign designed by youth advocates for their peers
  1. Increase awareness about consequences of drinking
  2. Direct youth to alternatives to drinking
  3. Help youth say no
  4. Give youth strategies/excuses to get out of difficult situations
  5. Help teens feel supported in making healthy decisions

# The Social Marketing Plan

- **Product** (behavior): not drinking alcohol
- **Price**: overcoming peer pressure; not being cool
- **Place**: everywhere youth are
  - schools, youth centers, sporting events
- **Promotion**: positive, accurate & funny messages
  
- **Target Audience**:
  - 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders
  - 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders as a secondary audience
  
- **Delivered by SMS**

# Situation Analysis: Youth Perspectives

<b>Strengths</b>	Our own ability to say no Our own responsibility and integrity Youth-run/developed project
<b>Opportunities</b>	Many students have cell phones Real-time Responses The school administration and health teachers, Medford Health Matters, the Medford Health Department all support our efforts
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Low self-esteem Dependence on other people's opinions
<b>Threats</b>	The power of peer pressure Perceived social norm is that most kids drink alcohol

# Promotion



- T-shirts, posters, flyers, buttons, pencils, wristbands, stickers
- Public Service Announcement
- Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
- Articles in local & regional newspaper
- State-wide youth conference

# The Message

- Consistent action oriented message:

**“When the pressure asks you “WHY NOT?”, you tell it WHY!  
Text TADD to 69302!”**



# The SMS system

- Short code: 69302
- Inbound messaging
  - **CHOICE:** Words of empowerment and alternatives to drinking
  - **EXCUSE:** Reasons not to drink and to get out of peer pressure situations
  - **FACTS:** Facts on underage alcohol use
  - **TADD:** For above three options and more information





# Outbound Messaging

- **Response to inbound**

- Individuals sent questions/comments about program to keyword
- Public Health/Prevention Specialist responded
- Personalized messages returned when questions asked
  - EX: What is binge drinking?

- **Requests**

- To subscribers requesting information
  - EX: What's your excuse to not drink?; Send us alternatives to drinking.
- Announcing new advertising component
  - t-shirts, wristbands
- Encouraging subscribers to seek out Team TADD member for more information or product advertisement

# Sample SMS Messages:

## Timing linked to events / pop culture

- **Excuse:**

- I have an exam tomorrow
- I have to drive later
- I have to pick up my sister
- I go crazy when I drink
- I work in the morning
- I'm good
- I don't want my picture of me drinking on facebook
- I don't drink
- Alcohol is made up of the same atoms as a fart
- It's my new year's resolution not to drink
- It might kill my dream of being an Olympic star

- **Choice:**

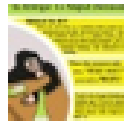
- Rather than cool off with a drink, cool off by jumping into a pool
- Alcohol free party this Friday after the game
- It's your reputation on the line, not theirs

- **Fact:**

- Most MHS students DON'T drink
- Mixing prescription drugs and alcohol can be deadly
- 38% of MHS students have 4 best friends that made a commitment to stay drug free

# Evaluation

- Post-intervention survey: Subset of questions from 2009 student survey
- Recruitment through Facebook, classes at MHS, outbound texts to all subscribers
- SMS system and advertising log



**I'm Allergic to Stupid Decisions!** Hey everyone, we are currently undergoing evaluation for our project and we were wondering if you could take this survey to help us out. But! we would also like to add that one individual who takes the survey will randomly be selected to receive an iTunes gift card.

Thank you very much, and be sure to text TADD to 6930...

[See More](#)

**Team TADD Confidential Survey**

[tinyurl.com](http://tinyurl.com)

Thank you for completing this survey! All questions are very important. Your answers will be confidential and you will not get into any trouble for your honest answers. Please answer each question honestly. Thank you for your time! At the end of this survey, please be sure to click the SUBMIT button. ...

 February 22 at 1:54am · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Share](#) · [Report](#)


# Results: SMS system log

- September 2009 – December 2009
- Total SMS in and out  $\approx$  806
- Inbound:
  - **EXCUSE:**  $\approx$  100 ongoing subscribers
  - **TADD:**  $\approx$  96 ongoing subscribers
  - **FACT:**  $\approx$  33 ongoing subscribers
  - **CHOICE:**  $\approx$  27 ongoing subscribers


# Results: SMS system log

- September 2009 – Dec 2009
- Total SMS in and out ≈ 1000
- Inbound:
  - **EXCUSE:** ≈ 100 ongoing subscribers
  - **TADD:** ≈ 96 ongoing subscribers
  - **FACT:** ≈ 33 ongoing subscribers
  - **CHOICE:** ≈ 27 ongoing subscribers

Objective:  
Direct youth to  
alternatives to drinking

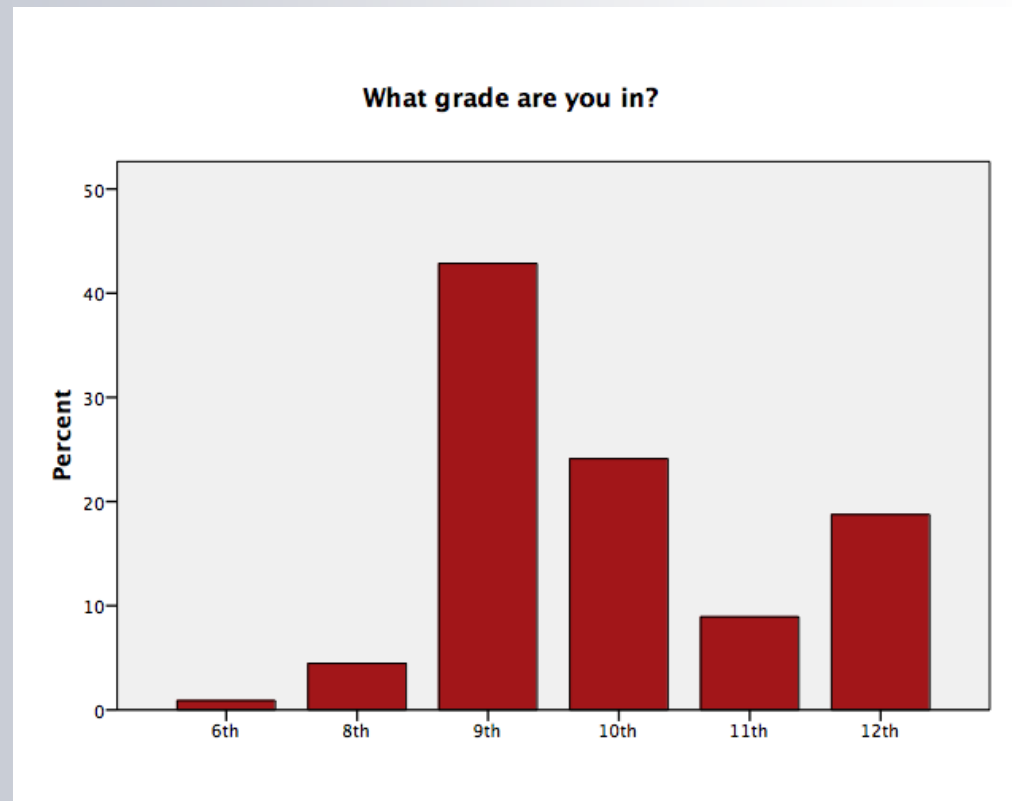


Objective:  
Give youth  
strategies/excuses to  
get out of difficult  
situations



# Results: post-test survey

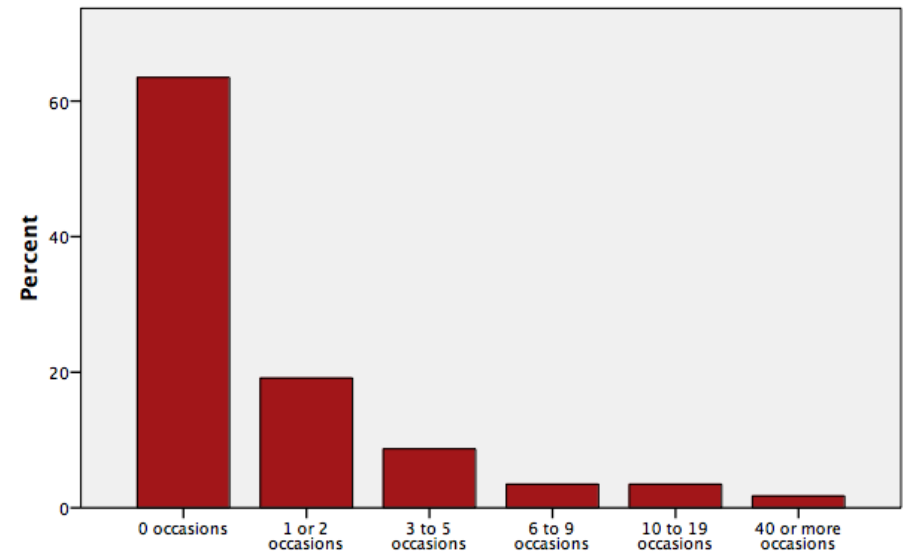
- N=116
- Gender: Female=52%; Male=48%
- Grade:
  - 6<sup>th</sup>: 1%
  - 8<sup>th</sup>: 4.3%
  - 9<sup>th</sup>: 41.4%
  - 10<sup>th</sup>: 23.3%
  - 11<sup>th</sup>: 8.6%
  - 12<sup>th</sup>: 18.1%



# Results

- Pre:
  - **42%** consumed alcohol during the past 30 days
  - **24%** reported binge drinking in last 30 days
- Post:
  - **37%** consumed alcohol during the past 30 days
  - **22%** reported binge drinking in last 30 days

5. Have you had alcohol beverages (beer, wine, or hard liquor) to drink more than just a few sips- during the past 30 days?



# Results:

- If you are at a party at someone's house, and one of your friends offers you a drink containing alcohol. What would you say or do?
  - **33%:** Drink it
  - **32%:** Just say, “No thanks” and walk away
  - **26%:** Tell your friend, “No thanks, I don't drink” and suggest that you and your friend go and do something else
  - **3%:** Text TADD or Excuse to 69302
  - **2%:** Make up a good excuse, tell your friend you have had something else to do, and leave



# Results:

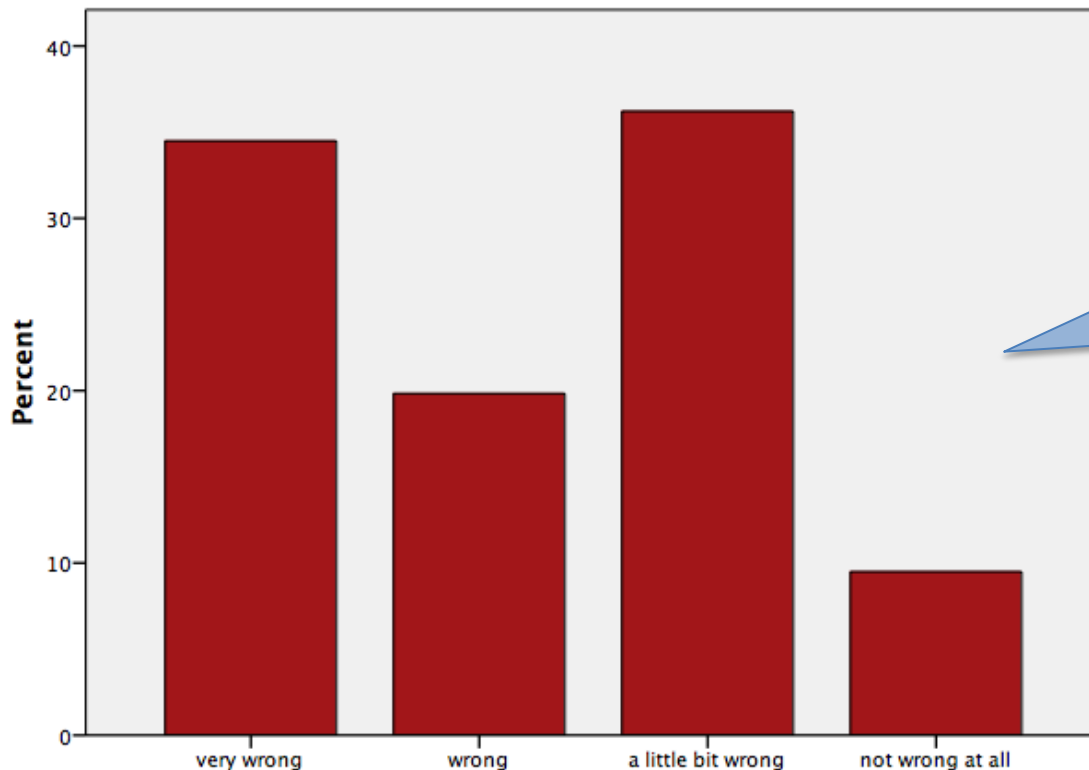
- If you are at a party at some point and your friend offers you a drink, what would you say or do?
  - **33%:** Drink it
  - **32%:** Just say, “No thanks” and walk away
  - **26%:** Tell your friend, “No thanks, I don’t drink” and suggest that you and your friend go and do something else
  - **3%:** Text TADD or Excuse to 69302
  - **2%:** Make up a good excuse, tell your friend you have had something else to do, and leave

**Objective:**  
**Help youth say no**



# Results

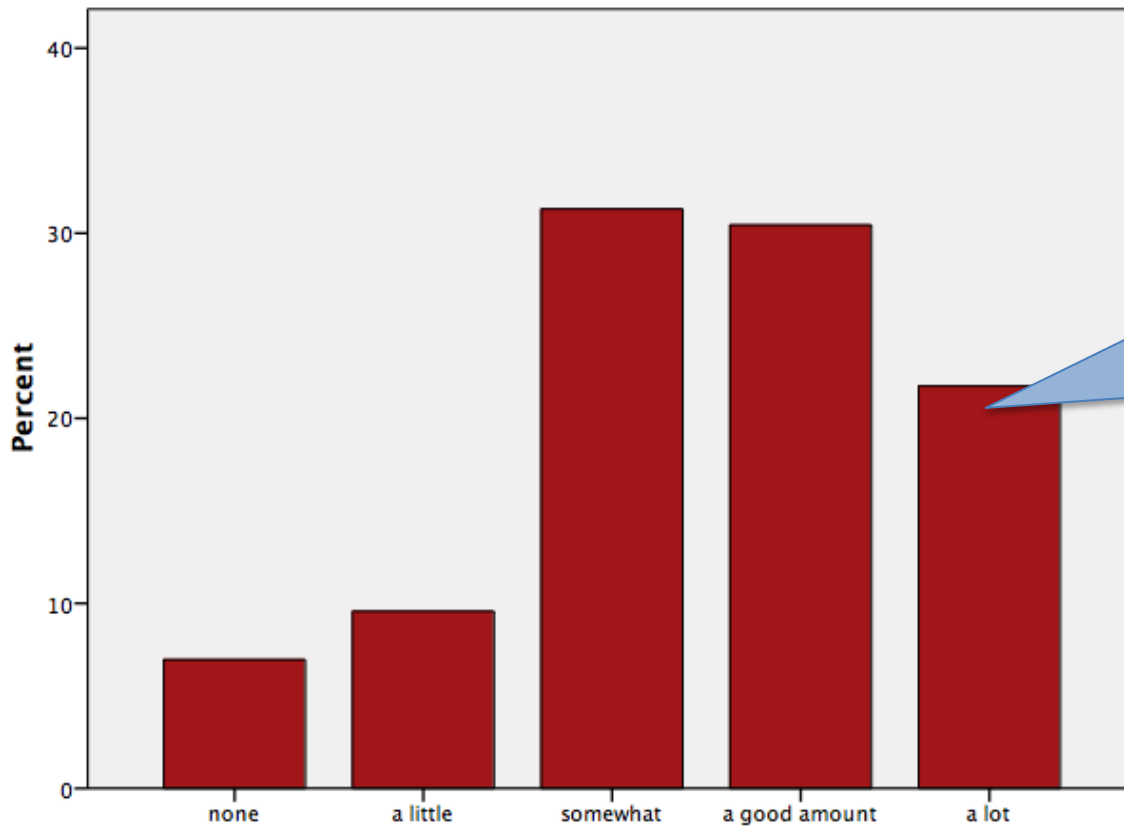
- How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly?



Most youth  
think it is  
**WRONG** to  
drink alcohol

# Results

- Drinking before you are 21 affects your brain development



Most youth  
think drinking  
alcohol  
negatively  
affects their  
brain

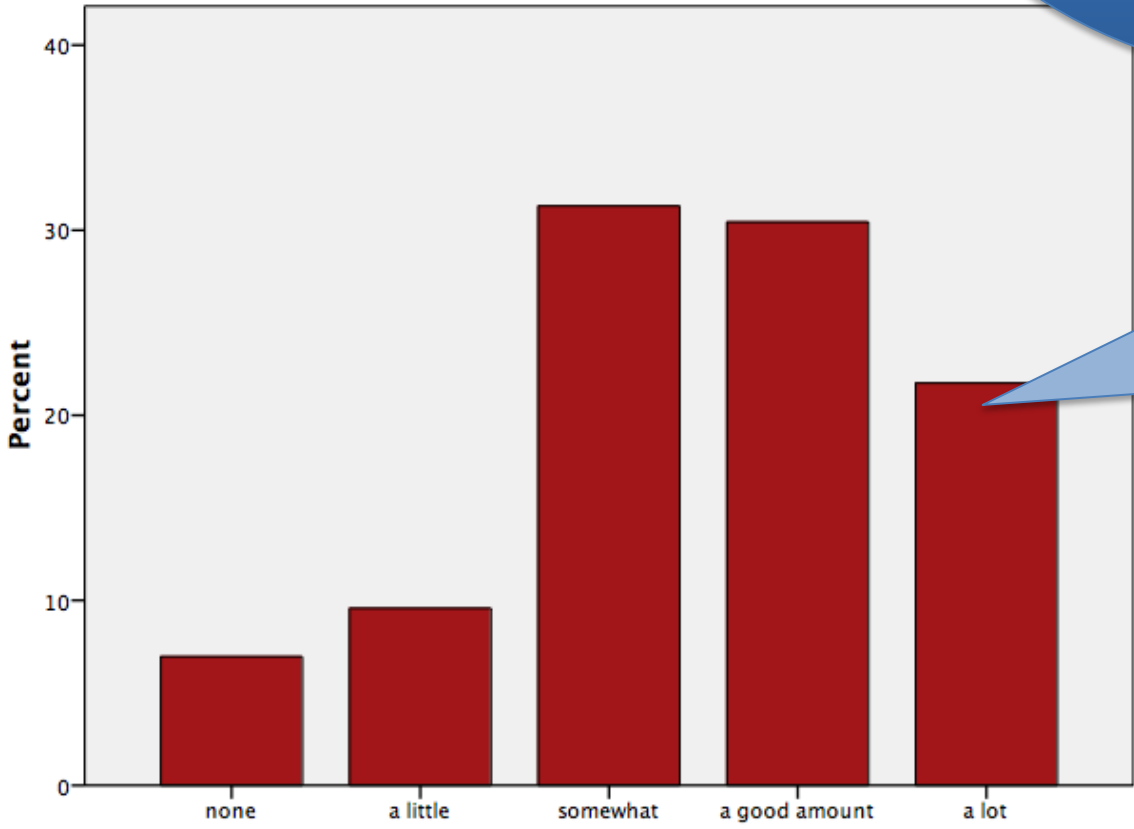
# Results

- Drinking before you are 21 affects

**Objective: Increase awareness about consequences of drinking**



**Most youth think drinking alcohol negatively affects their brain**





# Outcomes: Policy and partnership support

- Organizational support: Medford Board of Health
  - Increased financing of advertising material
  - Prolonged funding (originally 3 months. Additional 19 months of funding)
- Asked to present project at statewide conference (happening today in Massachusetts)
- Other communities interested in adopting
- State Dept. of Public Health taking interest
- We pushed the SMS service provider. They have responded
  - Ex: Random auto responders for 1 key word (Excuse)
    - We also want CHOICE and FACT

# Conclusion

- An SMS social marketing initiative aimed at increasing youth resistance to peer pressure provides a valuable opportunity for interventions among youth
- Ongoing, push advertising is key
- Updating and creating new promotion and place strategies helped maintain community's awareness and interest

