

# NEWS HERALD

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## Families sign Safe Homes Pledge

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For the first time in its history, 275 families in the Pennridge area have participated in the safe home directory.

By signing the Safe Homes Pledge, sponsored by the Pennridge Healthy Youth Healthy Communities Coalition, parents in the Pennridge area have agreed they will not allow unsupervised parties at their homes and, furthermore, they will not let anyone under age 21 consume alcohol. The pledging families will not allow illegal drugs to be used in their home and have promised to monitor Internet activities and television programs or movies their children watch as well.

"This is a tangible way that parents can feel they are part of the solution," said Lee Rush, executive director of Just Community in Quakertown, a coalition that promotes young people's assets and their involvement in the community.

Rush said some parents have a "cavalier attitude" towards young people ages 18 or 19 using alcohol. He said in a May 2002 survey conducted by the Pennridge School Board, 66 percent of students said their family life provides high levels of love and support. However, only 29 percent of those surveyed said parents and children communicate positively.

The student survey responses were anonymous and voluntary and several were eliminated because of inconsistent answers. Rush said the survey results, taken from students in grades six through 12, are a great benefit to the area because it will allow programs like Healthy Youth Healthy Communities to better

tailor their many programs. Of the 40 developmental assets on the coalition's list, which includes community values, positive peer influences and sense of purpose, Pennridge students possess an average of 18 assets. The national average is also 18, added Rush.

"The philosophy towards community mobilization is paying attention to youth development," said Rush. He further explained by communities building skate parks, like Quakertown and Perkasio, with government money and allowing youths to participate in municipal government, communities are sending a positive message to young people that they are valued.

These kinds of issues as well as defining what the coalition's 40 assets mean to a particular area were discussed at this year's Healthy Youth Healthy Communities conference.

"It's very ambitious because they're tackling a difficult subject matter," said Perkasio's Borough Manager, John Cornelius, who attended the conference this month.

Rush said the most important part of his coalition's efforts is to involve parents, teachers, neighbors and other community members to forward youth development. He noted when young people exhibit poor behavior like drug and alcohol abuse it's not the fault of the parents or the school, but poor behavior "is the result of the entire culture."

Rush said his coalition plans on completing another directory next year and is hopeful more families will sign the Safe Homes Directory. For more information about the directory or the Healthy Communities Healthy Youth Coalition, visit [www.justcommunity.com](http://www.justcommunity.com).