



# MENTAL HEALTH MONDAYS



## "Prevention in Today's World - Just Say No to the Old Prevention Models!"

On Monday, August 17, Deborah Comella, Executive Director of the [Lee County Coalition for a Drug-Free SWFL](#) and Jonathan Engh, Senior Vice President of Busey Bank and Board Chairman for Lee County Coalition for a Drug-Free SWFL discussed "Prevention in Today's World - Just Say No to the Old Prevention Models!"

### DEBORAH COMELLA

#### What does the coalition do?

If you look around Fort Myers and Lee County and see the billboards with the red solo cups and the "When it comes to underage drinking #refuse" campaign, that is something we are probably best known for that we did with the [Cape Coral High School SADD club](#). We work on prevention events, we celebrate red ribbon week, we host Drug House Odyssey and supply prevention information for families in Lee County.

**We often hear about our kids making bad decisions about drugs and alcohol, but so many of our kids are making good decisions.**

They are involved in sports, they are involved in music, they are involved in school activities, they are building robots and solving the problems of the future for us.

#### How do we keep our kids this way?

Old campaigns were "this is your brain on drugs" and "just say no." These are dated. They did stick in everyone's mind, but I think our kids have changed with the times, and we have to change. How do we do that? There are resources (see below).

**It's important to talk - and listen - to our kids.**

It may seem like they aren't listening, but they are when we talk to them about alcohol and drugs. It's a conversation that can start when children are as young as 4 or 5. Kids can get a good sense about making good choices the more we talk to them. When it comes to alcohol and drugs, we also need to listen to them and find out what they are hearing about, what they are seeing, what kids are talking about online. As parents, we need to understand the end game is for kids to be comfortable talking to us no matter what. We want our kids to be resilient, to be able to make good decisions, to be prepared for situations where they are being pressured. Alcohol will be and continues to be the biggest abused substance for kids in Lee County.

## JONATHAN ENGH

### Why did I get involved with the coalition?

I have two girls and I wanted to get involved in the community and make a difference. Times have changed, households have changed, dynamics have changed but the one model rings true: It takes a village. These days it seems that both parents are working or single-parent families where kids seem to have a lot more time alone, maybe not getting the direction. Since 2009, when I joined the coalition, we've done a lot of prevention events, we've gotten more involved with the schools and the youth.

### The key is finding ways to have these conversations.

These days with legalizing marijuana, underage drinking, vaping, the internet, the ability to get things by ordering online there's a world of issues that I wasn't accustomed to as a child. We continue to work with partner agencies to gather information and data and see what is changing and evolving, allowing us to alter programs to make a difference in someone else's life.

## RESOURCES

- [The Drug House Odyssey Sizzle Reel](#)
- [Full Drug House Odyssey video](#)
- Drug House Odyssey Family Night, February 3, 2021 at the Lee County Civic Center from 5 to 6:30 p.m. It is free and no reservations are needed
- ["Talk They Hear You" App from SAMHSA \(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association\)](#)
- [Lee County Schools Talk 15 Prevention Program](#)
- [Cape Coral Police Department Helping Educate Loving Parents \(HELP\) Prevention Program](#)
- [Prevention Parents SWFL Facebook page](#)
- Feel free to [contact us](#) if you want to start a Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Club at your school, church or organization



## QUESTIONS FROM VIEWERS

**Q: Any thought or ideas for us to be aware as we are doing virtual education?**

**Deb:** All the SWFL Coalitions will be working on virtual education this year. The Drug House Odyssey Video is a great, local resource. Other resources are above.

**Q: Do you have any tips for parents worried about their kids and potential substance abuse?**

**Deb:** Yes, I would recommend that on September 10 at 7:00 p.m. you listen to the program that Lt. [Allan Scott Kolak](#) will be presenting on our [Prevention Parents SWFL Facebook page](#) on Emerging Trends in Southwest Florida. He will address what they are seeing in Law Enforcement, and some of the symptoms and signs of drug abuse. Another useful source is the [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#), they have a [blog](#) that is very useful.





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## About Kids' Minds Matter

The goal of Kids' Minds Matter is to raise awareness about the need for pediatric mental and behavioral health care services and to raise the funds required to make these services available in the region through Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida and Lee Health. An estimated 46,000 Southwest Florida children are impacted by mental and behavioral health disorders like anxiety, depression, eating disorders, psychosis, substance abuse, autism, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. As part of the region's strategic solution to the children's mental and behavioral health epidemic in Southwest Florida, Kids' Minds Matter is dedicated to fostering partnerships that support existing services, identifying and filling gaps in the continuum of care, and innovating new treatments.

Philanthropic support for Kids' Minds Matter has allowed Lee Health and Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida to: implement a tiered model of care that clinically aligns community, inpatient and outpatient care; hire additional psychiatrists, child advocates and other mental health professionals; offer Mental Health First Aid training to local pediatricians, emergency service providers and others who work directly with children; renovate an outpatient center in Fort Myers where a child's needs can be addressed in a therapeutic setting; and launch a first-of-its-kind Pediatric Digital Cognitive Behavioral Health diagnostic and treatment protocols interlaced with Tele-Psychology support to treat anxiety, depression and trauma. Most recently, Kids' Minds Matter introduced mental health care navigators into Lee and Collier County schools who will help families find resources and care to address their child's mental healthcare needs.

The "Mental Health Mondays" segments are a public forum, designed for open discussions that benefit a large audience, and to provide real-time resources and advice from pediatric mental health professionals and advocates. The information shared on this platform is intended for general public consumption and not intended for individual treatment. The views, advice, and resources shared by each guest speaker are solely their own and are not endorsed by Lee Health, Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida and Kids' Minds Matter. Kids' Minds Matter is dedicated to raising awareness and essential funding to enhance pediatric mental & behavioral health programs, services and access to care in Southwest Florida. To learn more about Kids' Minds Matter, visit [KidsMindsMatter.com](http://KidsMindsMatter.com).

