



## Who is making a difference in Franklin?

*Contributed by the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force*

Webster's Dictionary defines coalition as "a group of people, groups, or countries who have joined together for a common purpose: the action or process of joining together with another or others for a common purpose." And that definition perfectly describes the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force. The common goal that brings our coalition together is a healthy environment for the drug and alcohol-free development of our youth and families in Franklin and Hill. The Task Force has only one paid staff position and our work relies heavily on volunteer

efforts. Task Force members and partners come from all sectors of the community. Let us introduce you to one task force member who makes our coalition work so well...

Lynn Haskell is proud to say she has been involved with the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force since the beginning – even before they became a federal Drug Free Communities Grantee. So Lynn has seen the Task Force grow and evolve over the past 5 years and believes strongly in our mission.

Lynn, who has a background in human services, is the Program Manager for the Franklin office of the Merrimack County Juvenile Diversion Program. Lynn has worked with Juvenile Diversion programs for over 13 years, and while she started her career in Concord, she moved to the Franklin office in 2002.

For those who aren't familiar with Juvenile Diversion it is an intervention program that works with first-time juvenile offenders. It is a voluntary alternative to the criminal justice system for young people who have committed a non-violent crime or violation of the law. Youth can be referred to the Diversion Program through court order, police, parents or schools for any of the services offered. When referred as a first-time juvenile offender the ultimate outcome for successful participation in the program is that they will have no criminal record if they complete contractual obligations.

The Diversion Program offers two valuable alternatives to the traditional criminal justice system: 1) Teen Court; 2) Community Accountability Board (CAB). Both the Teen Court Program and CAB utilize a restorative justice approach to rehabilitation. This approach allows juveniles to focus on repairing the damage caused to the victims(s), community, family and self. Both of these programs operate with the help of numerous volunteers—from teens to seniors. Currently, the Teen Court program is only operating out of the Concord office.

Lynn responded to the call put out for volunteers to join the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force—mostly because it was described as a group that would be addressing substance abuse in Franklin, but also because from her work perspective she understands the value of volunteers to community-based programs. The substance abuse prevention and education piece is a key factor to Lynn's involvement. Lynn believes the work of the Task Force and the work of her office are very much connected. "The earlier we educate youth on making healthy choices," says Lynn, "the greater the chances are that I won't see them in my programs."

But it isn't just a professional connection for Lynn, it is personal too. "I am passionate about substance abuse prevention," she says. "Every day you see the toll it takes on youth and families. It's a much scarier world out there today in regards to substance abuse, and it will take work to make a difference. I want to make a difference," says Lynn.

Lynn hopes people will embrace the work the task force is doing. She says "it is important for people to understand that the Task Force is not cracking down on individuals, the focus is on spreading awareness and education." Lynn feels that sometimes people focus too much on the words, "task force" and not on the important work they do. She runs into the same problem with her programs when people hear the word "court" it brings up a negative image.

Lynn hopes that more people will become involved in the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force, as those local roots, connections and community support are what will sustain the work of the Task Force. "People need to understand the prevention side, and once they see all the good things the Task Force is making happen, I know they'll be excited," says Lynn.

For more information about the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force and how you can join others in making a difference, click on the link for the Drug Task Force at [www.franklinnh.org](http://www.franklinnh.org), or call 998-5337.