

# BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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December 18, 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian,

On Thursday evening December 17, 2015 an event was held at the Ridge High School Performing Arts Center called Help Kids Make Good Decisions. The Somerset Hills YMCA collaborated with school and community leaders to bring Chris Herren, former NBA player, to the school to speak to area parents and youth about his life-long battle with addiction. If you were unable to attend, you might be interested in hearing Chris's story in the ESPN film *30 for 30: Unguarded*. In any event, I would like to share with you a few of the things that Chris spoke about during his talk last night that might be helpful to you or your child:

- Early exposure to drugs and alcohol at basement parties were the start of the problem for Chris. Chris shared that of the 15 or so peers he went to basement parties with, 7 ultimately developed addictions. Chris emphasized that helping the children needs to happen at the beginning, not at the end when there is a big problem. Chris challenged the audience to ask young people questions: "Why can't you just be you? Why is being yourself not enough?" in an effort to spark a conversation with youth to develop them socially without the need for substance abuse.
- Chris talked about key decisions in his life that took him from one level of addiction to the next. He really emphasized that a single decision can make all the difference. Chris talked about the first pill, the first line, the first injection as turning points in his life that he could never get away from.
- Chris also talked about how a group of caring friends or even one person can make a difference in saving someone's life. Chris talked about the group of teammates that he had during his first year as a Denver Nugget – his teammates looked out for him and helped him to make the right decisions, he said that was the best year of his life. Chris talked about a nurse who would not let him walk away from the hospital (to an almost certain death) and how the nurse insisted he come back inside so that she could help him. Chris explained that the love and care of this one nurse ultimately set him on the road to being drug and alcohol free.

What a great message to adults and youth alike. A message about hope, a message about love, a message about how human beings can save one another and how one decision, one person, can make all the difference. On the next page of this correspondence you will find useful links from our school district's website related to the topics of substance abuse and student assistance. If you need help, I encourage you to use these resources. I wish you a joyous and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,



Nick Markarian

Bernards Township School District Website  
Useful Links on the Subject of Substance Abuse

- 1) The Ridge High School Student Assistance Program, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
<http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/cms/One.aspx?portalId=3096972&pageId=5752359>
- 2) The William Annin Middle School Student Assistance Program, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
[http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/departments/counseling\\_department/william\\_annin\\_middle\\_school\\_guidance/](http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/departments/counseling_department/william_annin_middle_school_guidance/)
- 3) The Substance Abuse Prevention Program guide, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
[http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_3096886/File/Migration/BernardsBOE/CMFiles/Docs/general/Substance\\_Abuse\\_Prevention\\_Program.pdf](http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3096886/File/Migration/BernardsBOE/CMFiles/Docs/general/Substance_Abuse_Prevention_Program.pdf)
- 4) The Voluntary Random Drug Testing Program, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
[http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/parents/voluntary\\_random\\_drug\\_testing\\_program/](http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/parents/voluntary_random_drug_testing_program/)
- 5) Family Resources Tab, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
[http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/parents/links-\\_parents\\_students/](http://bernardsboe.ss5.sharpschool.com/parents/links-_parents_students/)

Other Useful Links

- 1) The Safe Communities Coalition of Hunterdon and Somerset, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
[www.safecoalition.org](http://www.safecoalition.org)
- 2) The Bernards Township Municipal Alliance, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
<http://www.bernardsalliance.org/>
- 3) The Somerset County YMCA, click [here](#) or follow the link below.  
<http://www.somersetcountyyymca.org/>