

The background is a watercolor illustration of a forest. The top portion is a wash of blue, representing the sky. Below it, there are various shades of green, from light to dark, representing the foliage of trees. Black ink outlines are used to define the shapes of the trees and their branches, creating a layered, depth-filled effect. The overall style is artistic and organic.

# SALT

Sullivan Allies Leading Together

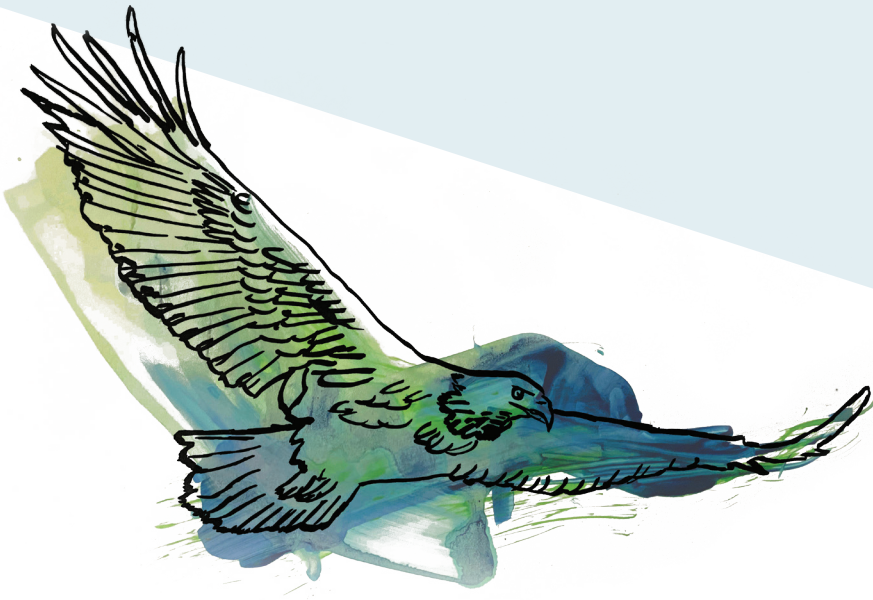
**WE CAN·WE WILL**

## **YOUTH IMPACT INITIATIVE**

SALT's Drug-Free Communities Grant

# OUR MOTTO

“We Can, We Will”



## ABOUT SALT

Formed in the fall of 2015, Sullivan Allies Leading Together (SALT) is a community coalition composed of a diverse partnership of agencies and community resources, working to improve the quality of life for the residents of Sullivan County.

## SULLIVAN COUNTY

Sullivan County, New York is a rural community facing significant obstacles concerning access to services that support, treat, stabilize, and prevent substance use. For the past decade, our county has placed second to last in the New York State County Health Rankings.

According to the New York State Department of Health, Sullivan County Health Rankings, from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Data, Sullivan New York has the highest drug overdose mortality rates in New York at 27.9 per 100,000 (May 2017).

### DID YOU KNOW?

By adopting the Spanish word “marijuana,” rather than the already widely-used “cannabis,” Harry Anslinger, the First Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics in 1930 was intentionally connecting the use of marijuana by brown and black people, to dangerous and fabricated side effects of the drug.

For this reason, we are going to refer to marijuana as **cannabis** in this document.

Source: <https://www.thenewshouse.com/high-stakes/marijuana-is-more-than-a-word/>

## DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES GRANT

### Sullivan County's Youth Impact Initiative

SALT's substance use prevention work is done under the guidance of the Strategic Planning Framework of SAMHSA and is one of 40 similar coalitions in the Hudson River Valley/Upper Delaware River Basin region. SALT's partners' programs and efforts utilize evidence and researched based models to have a positive impact on risk and protective factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of substance use.

SALT's work is substantiated and monitored by a National Core Measure Survey. This survey of 900 Sullivan County youth in 2021 measured: **past 30-day use; perception of risk; perception of peer and parental disapproval on alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and prescription drugs**. SALT collects and reports new core measure data every two years.

SALT's work to prevent youth substance use is funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) by a Drug Free Communities (DFC) grant. The program was renamed “The Youth Impact Initiative” by youth in our community.

Using the research from our community, SALT aims to prevent alcohol and cannabis use among youth by offering pro-social opportunities and education to support healthy development — giving all our youth the chance for a productive and joyful life.

# ESTABLISHING CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Sullivan Allies Leading Together (SALT) members regularly work on cultural competency. Every person has their particular strengths and by embracing that all people are different, our work together can more collaboratively support an inclusive community.

SALT gets to know its community through surveys and weekly outreach, either in the streets of every town in Sullivan County or by going to school lunchrooms and meeting with youth. This allows SALT members to learn about the population and their pain points firsthand.

In turn, this knowledge allows SALT to shape programs and initiatives to meet the community's needs more effectively.

## How to Practice Empathy as Medicine

Consider a struggle you are feeling personally; now imagine how that pain may be different for another person. For example, every person has different transportation needs, more or fewer children, is older or younger than you, struggling with a substance use disorder, may be facing a health challenge, or is part of a minority population in your community. How might these factors affect the struggles you experience?

## Social Determinants of Health

Social indicators of health help people to assess what factors are playing a role in their lives. Imagine we have a family living in a portion of the community where transportation is not accessible, both parents travel, minimal access to medical care/insurance and are working minimum wage jobs. **The impacts of these things are their "social determinants of health," which can lead to higher rates of negative health outcomes: mental health, substance use, diabetes, etc.**

## Data Discrepancies

Despite the 2021 census reporting 16.8% of our community as Hispanic or Latino, the school enrollment statistics tell a different story, with **32% of students reporting as Hispanic or Latino**. This discrepancy can be a result of various factors, but something we need to consider when planning prevention programming.

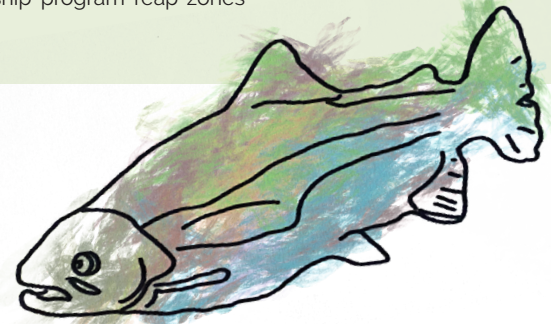
Source: <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2021&county=59>

## DID YOU KNOW?

Sullivan County is one of five **Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zones** in the U.S.

REAP is defined as a "geographic isolation of communities separated by long distances, low density settlement patterns, historic dependence on agriculture, continued population loss, and economic upheaval or distress."

Source: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/businesses/rural-economic-area-partnership-program-reap-zones>



## Total Population

**79,806** (as of 2021)

**70.7%** White (not Hispanic or Latino)

**16.8%** Hispanic/Latino

**10%** Black/African American

**3%** Two or more races

**2%** Asian

**0.8%** Native American

**0.1%** Pacific Islander



# YOUTH INTERESTS

## How to Engage All of Our Youth

In 2021, SALT gathered **Snapchat Lifestyle** information from **550 Sullivan County youth** that indicated their main interests:



Sports



Music



Film/TV



Food



Shopping



Trivia & Quizzes



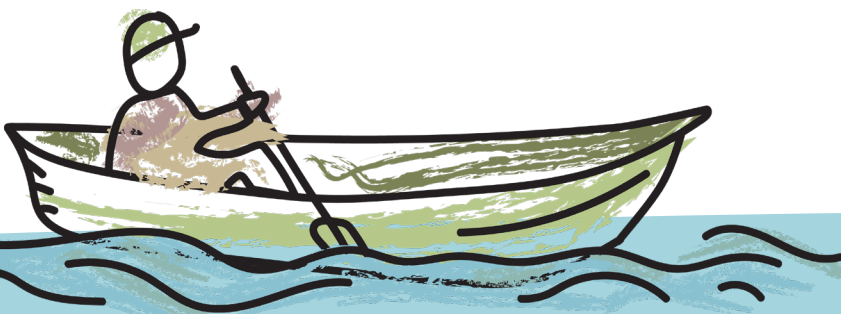
Gaming



Meme Watching



Connecting with other Youth





## Subjects of Interest

In listening sessions and lunchroom visits to over 5,200 Sullivan County youth, they expressed their interest in pro-social activities, safe spaces and projects that address these **specific subjects**:

- Sub-cultural self-identification
- Racism
- Anti-semitism
- LGBTQIAP+ information
- Safety
- Communication
- Social media literacy
- How to become a leader for yourself and share that knowledge with your friends who may be struggling with similar concerns: mental health, body image, thoughts of self harm, etc...



## More Activities of Interest

While many of the 29 Youth Serving Organizations offer programming to engage youth in “pro-social” activities, they are **largely sports related**. Many of the youth surveyed were also interested in other **art and design activities**, including:

- Interest in design
- How their minds and bodies work
- Fashion
- Creative arts
- The graphic arts
- Contemporary music (Hip-hop/Rap)
- Pure fun without competition (no “winners or losers”)



# PRO- SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

## WHAT ARE PRO-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES?

They are activities that build social and emotional skills in a fun and creative way.

### Outdoor Events

**Nature Experiences & Outdoor Sports**  
(SALT coordinates Disc Golf)

### School Presentations

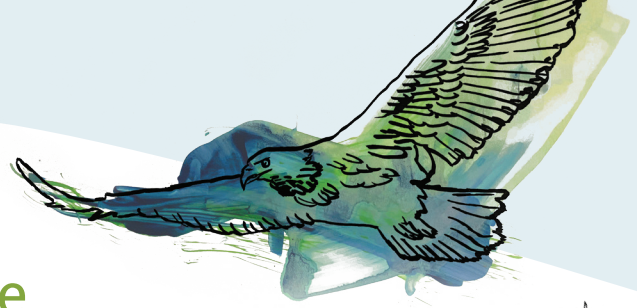
**Youth Listening Sessions**

### Family Time

**Lots of options!** One-on-one, games, going for a drive and listening to music in the car... even something as simple as a family meal — it doesn't need to be complex!

### Communication

**Talk about difficult topics** early and often to show you care, show you're paying attention and that you are a reliable source of knowledge.



## Leadership by Example

Leaders come in all shapes and sizes. **Share your special skills** such as rapping, skating or form a debate club.

## Wisdom Shared

Challenge yourself to **learn something new** from someone you love. Gather together and listen!

## Social Media

Develop **social media intelligence** to evaluate information (e.g. proactively prevent bullying).

### A SUCCESS STORY

Today, Iceland tops the European table for the cleanest-living teens. The percentage of 15-16 year olds who had been drunk in the previous month plummeted from **42 percent in 1998 to 5 percent in 2016**. If we compare those statistics to a similar 18 year range in the United States, we find 15-16 year olds that reported any alcohol usage over their lifetime dropped from **48.2% in 20013 to 19.3% in 2019**. The idea that we can prevent future harm through targeted prevention work specific to our population is well founded.

Sources:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/01/teens-drugs-iceland/513668/>

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/underage-drinking>



# SURVEY RESULTS

## 900 Youth July 2021 Fallsburg, Liberty & Monticello School Districts

Why do we measure Perception of Risk? Youth are more likely to engage in these activities when they don't think harm will come to them. As we see Perception of Risk go down, we expect use to go up. If we can act quickly on Perception of Risk we can head off increased use.

### PERCEPTIONS OF RISK

Young people in our survey felt that cannabis is a lot less risky than cigarettes.

Cannabis

31%

said it is not risky

Cigarettes

18.5%

said it is not risky

We see a high perception of risk associated with cigarettes due to 50 years of education on the harm caused. The low risk associated with the cannabis industry ("big cannabis") is based on the industry creating an unclear picture of cannabis products and usage.

### CANNABIS FACTS

**AFFECTS ON YOUR BRAIN.** Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the chemical responsible for most of cannabis's psychological effects, affects brain cells including cells in circuits related to learning and memory, coordination, and addiction.<sup>1</sup>

**AFFECTS ON YOUR LUNGS.** Cannabis smoke deposits four times more tar in the lungs and contains 50-70 percent more cancer-causing substances than tobacco smoke.<sup>1</sup>

**IT CAN BE ADDICTIVE.** Not everyone who uses cannabis becomes addicted, but some users develop signs of dependence.<sup>1</sup>

**LOOK AROUND YOU.** Most teens aren't smoking cannabis. In fact, only **6.5 percent of youth ages 12 to 17 said that they had smoked cannabis in the past month.**<sup>2</sup>

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Raising awareness allows a potential user of a substance to make their best decision. Consider comparing first time cannabis usage to first time alcohol usage. Most people's first drink is a beer and that equivalent in cannabis would be to smoke a joint in the 1960s. The new cannabis products are more like having your first drink be Everclear, which is 190 proof alcohol.

<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse (2018), <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/letter-director>

<sup>2</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2018). Results from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHFFR2017/NSDUHFFR2017.pdf>





## PERCEPTIONS OF CANNABIS USE

64.6% vs. 4.1%

of **youth** felt their peers disapprove of cannabis use

of **adults** said they felt young people believe personal cannabis use is wrong\*

The data shows a discrepancy in the perception of disapproval of recreational use of cannabis between adults and youth. **It seems adults think young people do not associate great risk with cannabis use.**

\*Sullivan County Survey of 122 adults from December 2021 - January 2022

80%

of young people ages 10-18

say their parents are the leading influence on their decision whether to drink or not. Don't assume they know how you feel about drinking and substance use. **You can send a clear and strong message that you disapprove of underage drinking and use or misuse of other drugs.**

## UNDERSTANDING ALCOHOL CONTENT

In an effort to sell more products, youth are not told the whole story of alcohol by the industry. Therefore, it is up to us as a community to educate ourselves, our families and our children. This knowledge allows youth to make a choice based on ALL the facts.

### Quiz! How many units of alcohol are in...?



1. **Bottle**

One bottle  
Wine 750 ml  
(13%)



2. **Large Glass**

Wine 250 ml  
(13%)



3. **Small Glass**

Wine 175 ml  
(13%)



4. **Pint**

Beer/Cider  
473 ml  
(3-4%)



5. **Pint**

Premium  
Beer/Cider  
473 ml  
(5-5.5%)



6. **Single**

Spirits 25 ml  
(40%)



7. **Double**

Spirits 70 ml  
(40%)



8. **Alcopop**

Hard Seltzer, etc.  
275 ml bottle (5%)

1 UNIT =

10 ML of 100% pure alcohol  
(or two 5 ML teaspoons)



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

What can we do? The Drug Free Communities (Youth Impact Initiative) seeks to increase the perception of harm and knowledge on the dangers of underage (non-medical) cannabis and alcohol use. We will also work to increase youth pro-social activities and youth leadership opportunities.

We all wish for our children to grow up in an environment that supports healthy choices and allows them to develop skills to control their behaviors and express their emotions. **How does this happen?**



## Increase parents' & youth knowledge & perception

SALT's Partners offer a wide variety of presentations for parents, guardians and schools on prevention topics including but not limited to: substance use prevention, mental health, current trends affecting youth and social media literacy.



## Adults can communicate a no use message

This is not a punishment. It is a health and safety caution similar to not allowing playing with matches.

Communicate **early and often that alcohol is an adult-only drink**. Teach your kids to make you the excuse: "my mom would kill me."



## Establish a youth council

to **strengthen coalition structure, visibility, and presence** in the towns of Liberty, Fallsburg & the Village of Monticello.

Youth who are passionate about design/art or want to help change things that don't work are encouraged to join!



**SALT is seeking community members & volunteers** who wish to share their wisdom and lessons learned from their work, as well as moments of importance that we can all celebrate.

**Want to be more involved in your community?** Attend one of SALT's Coalition Meetings. Visit [saltcares.com](http://saltcares.com) for details. This is all for you and depends on you.





## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH

We asked our local school resource officers and a family support navigator from ADAC what they see as best communication practices when connecting with a distressed youth. Here are their answers:

**JUST LISTEN, LET THEM TALK.** When you are listening don't look at your Apple watch, phone etc. Let them know with your body language and eye contact that you are hearing and paying attention to them.

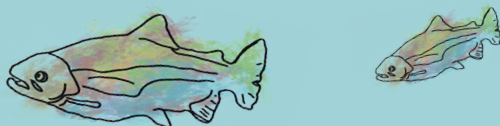
**ENGAGE — DON'T DWAP (DIRECT, WARN, ADVISE OR PERSUADE).** Just listen. From a family communication pro: "I'm not on board with offering advice because 9 times out of 10 these brilliant kids already have the goods to make the correct choices for themselves."

**REFLECT ON WHAT THEY TOLD YOU.** "Wow, that sounds frustrating. Yeah, I hear how angry you are," or "Wow, I can hear how sad you are about this."

**ASK QUESTIONS.** "I'm wondering what you think may be helpful" or "What would be most helpful for you right now?" Then listen.

**LET THEM "COOL DOWN."** Not all youth have the language or skills to manage emotional overload. Wait until they cool down and then, and only then, acknowledge that they are allowed to have all of their emotions.

**THANK THEM FOR TRUSTING YOU.** "If you ever want to talk again, I'm here for you."



# JUST SAY ~~NO~~ GO OUTSIDE!

— Nicole Slevin

## SALT

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(845) 397-7258

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artwork by Nathaniel Quinn