Taking a Look at Our Drinking Habits

By Rebecca Robinson, MSSW

April 9th is **National Alcohol Screening Day**. If there are two things that go together in the minds of most people, it would be college students and drinking. Perhaps that is just a stereotype for some, but many current and past college students will tell you that their college years are when they drank the most. It’s easy to fall into that way of thinking and assume that no matter how much we drink, we are just being “typical college students” and don’t have to worry about the amount we drink or how often. And for some, once they leave college and move on to work and family lives, their drinking **does** significantly decrease. However, for a significant number, that reduction in intake just doesn’t take place, and it becomes clear that college was just the beginning of a life-long problem with alcohol use.

Information from the National Institute on Health reveals that 4 of every 5 college students drink alcohol and half of those binge drinks. (Binge drinking is defined as heavy drinking with the primary intent of becoming intoxicated, or drinking a lot of alcohol over a very short period of time.) The NIH went on to add that over 1800 students die yearly from alcohol-related injuries, over 690,000 students are assaulted each year by someone who has been drinking, and that more than 97,000 students are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault and date rape yearly. These statistics clearly show that alcohol use on campus is an issue that impacts everyone, even those who do not drink. Signs of possible alcohol abuse include:

- Feeling guilty or ashamed of your drinking
- Lying to others or hiding your drinking habits
- Having friends or family members who are worried about your drinking
- Needing to drink in order to relax or feel better
- “Blacking out” or forgetting what you did while you were drinking
- Regularly drinking more than you intended to

During this day of focus on alcohol use, it might be helpful to all of us to stop and give some thought to how we are affected by the misuse and abuse of alcohol. Taking a minute to thoughtfully evaluate our own drinking habits might provide an opportunity to make healthy changes. **The Counseling Center will be offering confidential alcohol screenings on April 8th from 11 am to 2 pm in the Atrium of the Student Center.** In addition to gaining valuable insight into your alcohol use, those who choose to get screened will also be entered into a drawing for a gift basket! Another way to take the screening is to log on to [http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/TEXASCOMMERCE](http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/TEXASCOMMERCE).

This on-line tool is also confidential. The Counseling Center also offers counseling at no cost to currently enrolled students, and can help answer questions and address issues related to alcohol use.

Here’s to healthy and safe use of alcohol.