

JCCV URGES RESPONSIBLE DRINKING ON SIMCHAT TORAH

29 September 2009

The solemn and reflective days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are behind us and we hope that Hashem will answer our prayers for a good year.

The atmosphere now lightens as we prepare for Sukkot and Simchat Torah. This change in mood has its dangers, however, and the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) has again stressed the importance of responsible drinking on Simchat Torah as part of an ongoing campaign that commenced in early 2009.

According to JCCV president John Searle, all members of the Victorian Jewish community have to take a stand in relation to this problem.

“Clearly, parents and the rabbinate have to take the lead in opposing alcohol abuse on Simchat Torah, but no one should be a bystander, particularly in relation to teenage drinking. To this end the JCCV together with the Rabbinical Council of Victoria, Hatzolah and the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence are putting a notice in the Australian Jewish News calling upon the community to watch out for young people on Simchat Torah. Scientific evidence increasingly demonstrates the harmful effects of binge drinking, too often irreversible, on developing brains. When one considers the dangers of alcohol-induced risky behaviour including violence, accidents and sexual abuse, what young people consider a night of fun may well end up one of tragedy.”

Searle continued, “It is increasingly clear is that alcohol abuse is no longer confined to Purim or Simchat Torah, but is a regular weekend – and even more frequent – activity for too many young Jews. The JCCV accordingly has been consulting with various stakeholders over the course of the year. We have also sought funding from certain bodies and I am pleased to announce that we have received a grant from the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation for a community education program encouraging responsible consumption of alcohol. This will certainly help, and we will continue to push the need for education in this area, but I again stress that what is most important is our community clearly stating that alcohol abuse is unacceptable.”

Please address any queries to Geoffrey Zygiel 03 9272 5579



JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
OF VICTORIA INC
מועצת הקהילה היהודית בויקטוריה
"דישטר קהילה-ראט פון וויקטאריע"

306 HAWTHORN ROAD
CAULFIELD SOUTH
VICTORIA AUSTRALIA 3162

TELEPHONE 03 9272 5566
FACSIMILE 03 9272 5560
info@jccv.org.au
www.jccv.org.au

ARN A0039459M

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