

WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

September 2006

Site of the Month

Growing up as a teenager in rural, northern Minnesota during the late sixties and early seventies, I believed my community was immune from the Twin Cities' problems. Sure we had some, but it was more like a basketball player being suspended from a game or two because he was caught drinking. After I'd left for college, I heard that teens in my community were using marijuana, which did not surprise me because pot had become a social drug at the universities that I'd attended. I was, however, shocked when I'd heard that methamphetamine (meth) labs had sprouted up in northern Minnesota within the past few years. That, to my illogical way of thinking, crossed over to a big-city problem. Residents of northern Minnesota grew sugar beets, grains, beans, and potatoes, they did not manufacture illicit drugs. My fondness for rural Minnesota and rural America in general, is one reason I enjoyed the report *Substance Abuse in Rural and Small Town America* by Karen Van Gundy.

Van Gundy suggests that the demographics of rural America, among other things, are changing. As a consequence, it will have to face many challenging issues, including substance abuse. She uses data and stories to document substance abuse in rural America, provides recommendations for fighting substance abuse, and discusses policy implications. A sampling of her findings follows.

- ◆ Proportionally, rural America's self-reported meth use is higher than urban youths' use (8 in 1,000 versus 5 in 1,000).
- ◆ Rural youth at younger ages abuse alcohol at a higher rate than urban youth. Twice as many rural youth ages 12 to 13 abuse alcohol than do their urban counterparts.
- ◆ Substance-abuse rates were about the same for the racial/ethnic groups, although "rural Hispanics were more likely to abuse alcohol than urban Hispanic youth."
- ◆ Generally, drug abuse was related to educational achievement of rural youth. Illicit-drug rates were lower for high school rural graduates than for rural nongraduates. Stimulant abuse was not affected by education.
- ◆ Rural residents were seven times more likely to abuse stimulants than urban residents.

To access more of Van Grundy's findings and implications of the findings go to:
http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/documents/SubstanceAbuse_FinalPDF.pdf.