From the desk of the Executive Director, Sharon Kramer:

Yea!! Manatee County Substance Abuse Coalition launches the New Year with greatly increased capacity. First and foremost, Coordinator Rita Chamberlain, who has been with the coalition part-time since 2005, is now in the office full-time and brings her MBA and grant writing expertise to the important work of the coalition.

The Board of Directors has added three new Board Members - Dwayne Parker representing faith based; Tommylee Edwards, a student at Southeast High School and member of Manatee County Youth Commission representing youth and Julie Aranibar, a member of the Manatee County Board of Education, filling the civic sector slot. They met with the Board for the first time February 1st at the Retreat scheduled at Manatee County Professional Support Center and will be featured in the next newsletter.

Board member Wendy Nebrija has provided the community with a valuable tool - an updated and comprehensive website. Wendy has done the research and the new site will help parents, youth and community members with the latest up-to-date information on priority projects and local resources. Please go to www.drugfreemanatee.org and then drop Wendy a note to Wendy Nebrija and let her know how much we appreciate her knowledge, skills and many, many hours of volunteer work.

Mark your Calendar.

A partnership with Health Teens Coalition of Manatee County and Manatee County Youth Commission also increases coalition capacity. We will co-sponsor Courage to Speak: Consequences of Silence, at Pirate City on April 12th. This event is designed to increase communication between high school youth and adults on important topics. Pizza and salad will be served at 6:30, followed by comments from guest speaker Chris Martini and small group discussions facilitated by Manatee Youth Commission. More details will be in the next newsletter but mark your calendar.

More capacity news - we are partnering with Manatee Health Department and the Tobacco Free Coalition of Manatee County for a
Tobacco Free Night at McKechnie, May 18th. This project launched successfully last year with the Pittsburgh Pirate players' PSA focused on middle school students who signed a pledge to be tobacco-free. You'll want to buy a ticket to the game.

### Manatee County Permanent Prescription Drug Ordinance Proposed

**Workshop for Ordinance 11-047 on February 14th**

MCSAC is pleased to continue to work with the County, law enforcement, code enforcement, the Health Department, physicians, and many other stakeholders in efforts to draft a strong permanent prescription drug ordinance. Public remarks noting gaps and weaknesses in the draft ordinance were made by MCSAC Coordinator Rita Chamberlain, MCSAC Prescription Drug Task Force Chair Ruth Lyerly, Luz Corcuera (Program Director at Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County) and audience members personally affected by prescription drug abuse at the initial presentation of the draft ordinance by Deputy County Attorney Jim Minix to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on November 8th, 2012. As a result, the BCC requested Atty. Minix to consult directly with MCSAC, law enforcement, Manatee physicians and other stakeholders to develop a strong and effective ordinance acceptable to all sectors.

MCSAC staff and representatives had a very productive meeting with Attorney Minix and members of the Board of the Manatee Medical Society on December 16th, creating a stronger, more effective ordinance that included language requiring physicians to conduct pregnancy testing and also consult the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) database before prescribing opioids. A subsequent meeting on January 9th saw Atty Minix meeting with Manatee County Sheriff’s representatives (including MCSAC member Capt. Pat Bartholomew), County Code Enforcement and a representative of the Florida State Attorney's office. It appears that no substantive changes were made to the language of the draft ordinance at that time, though permit duration was extended to two years rather than requiring an annual renewal.

A workshop with the BCC (and open to all interested stakeholders!) is scheduled for **February 14th at 9AM** in the **4th Floor conference room** of the Manatee County Administrative Building: **1112 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton**. MCSAC representatives will be afforded the opportunity to provide a brief presentation at this workshop to advocate for passage of the ordinance. **If you plan to attend please let Sharon or Rita know at 941-749-3030 ext 3491 or by email.**

### Mark Your Calendars!

**Townhall, April 12, 2012: Courage to Speak, Consequences of Silence**

MCSAC's Annual Town Hall meeting, which begins with a **FREE meal at 6:30 PM** in the dining hall at Pirate City **[1701 27th Street]**
East, Bradenton, offers an evening focused on substance use related issues that are most important to young people. This year’s event reverts to its hugely successful (and fun) 2010 format of youth-led, small group discussions about the problems they see and their perspective on community solutions. The program also features motivational Guest Speaker Chris Martini. Join us and meet other teens, parents & caring adults who want to make a difference! Seating is limited so RSVP to Sharon Kramer at skramer@drugfreemanatee.org as soon as you can.

2012 Florida Legislative Update

This year’s annual state legislative session started on Jan. 10th, two months earlier than usual. This is primarily because legislators have to approve new voting districts based on latest Census figures, which must be ready in time for the 2012 elections. But even with the early start, House Speaker Dean Cannon indicated that the legislature has "limited bandwidth" for issues other than redistricting and the required passage (by July 2012) of a state budget.

However, MCSAC will continue to follow bills that were filed this session that impact our community’s substance abuse priority issues including:

- **Florida’s 911 Good Samaritan Act (HB 125 and SB 278)** - many drug overdoses involve illicit drugs or the illegal abuse of prescription drugs and fear of police involvement plays a role in deterring or delaying help-seeking in response to an overdose. In fact, fear of police involvement is the most common reason for not calling 911 during an overdose. When someone overdoses in America, a call for help occurs less than 50% of the time. Good Samaritan policies have the unanimous support of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The Florida Police Benevolent Association and the Florida Sheriffs Association also approve of these policies because they can save lives without interfering with police investigations. The 911 Good Samaritan Act grants limited immunity from prosecution only for simple drug possession. MCSAC SUPPORTS THIS LEGISLATION.

- **Support for Prescription "Drug Drops" (HB 333 and SB 626; HB 335 and SB 624)** - companion bills that require the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to establish a grant program to reimburse local law enforcement agencies for expenses associated with the collection & disposal of household pharmaceuticals, funded through the establishment of a Trust Fund with revenue stream provided through court-ordered surcharges for specified offenses. MCSAC SUPPORTS THIS LEGISLATION.

- **Open Parties (HB 585) [Pilon] and (SB 688) [Bennett]** - revises definitions to apply restrictions formerly applicable just to open house parties to ALL open parties (not solely those occurring in a residence). MCSAC SUPPORTS THIS LEGISLATION.

- **Creating a FL Task Force on Prescription Drug Abuse & Newborns (HB 227 and SB 402)** - provides legislative intent, purposes, membership, etc. with staffing support through the Dept. of Legal Affairs. MCSAC SUPPORT THIS LEGISLATION.

- **Permitting the Medical Use of Cannabis (Marijuana) (HB 353 [Clemens] and SB 1028 [Bullard])** - proposes the creation of a new Section 28 under Article X, and a new Section 32 under Article XII, of the State Constitution to allow the medical use of cannabis by
citizens, with details TBD by committee. MCSAC STRONGLY OPPOSES THIS LEGISLATION. More information about "medical" marijuana can be found on the MCSAC website at www.drugfreemanatee.org

Attention!

Action Opportunities

Upcoming community and MCSAC events offer a broad range of opportunities for you to get more involved - really hands-on - to make sure positive change happens in Manatee County. There will be something for everyone highlighted in subsequent newsletters. Take a look at your first Action Opportunity below and sign up now by contacting either Rita or Sharon at 941-749-3030, ext 3491 or by email Sharon Kramer or Rita Chamberlain.

Community Festival Scans

MCSAC NEEDS YOUR HELP to assess and offer some options for consideration for safer policies for some local festivals over the next few months. You can have a good time and still help us out! Public festivals are an important part of our community life and culture. At their best, they can be a place for kids to play and family and friends to gather. However, when alcohol is a major part of the celebration, community events can be marred by alcohol-related violence or vandalism and problems associated with underage drinking. Public events often unintentionally support and encourage heavy use of alcohol. With beer tents, signage and sponsorships, alcohol can easily overshadow the purpose of these events and become the main attraction.

MCSAC will offer training, materials, entrance fees (if needed) for adult and youth volunteers for the upcoming festivals/events to be scanned:

The Rubonia/Terra Ceia Mardi Gras "A Day of Carnival"
Sunday, February 26, 2012, 10AM to 8PM

MCSAC's EUDL-funded Engaging Youth Initiative members assessed this Palmetto event last year, and presented their findings - and suggestions for improvement - to the event organizers. MCSAC would like to assess the event this year to identify any changes/improvements in order to evaluate the impact of this initiative.

The De Soto Heritage Festival SeaFood Fest
Friday, March 30 - Sunday, April 1, 2012 (10 AM to 9 PM daily)

A three-day event on Old Main Street, Bradenton, features some of the best seafood around along with other tasty offerings from area restaurants and food vendors. The event includes continuous entertainment on two stages as well as area artisans and craft vendors.
MCSAC assessed this event last year and is looking for changes/improvements.

De Soto Heritage Grand Parade
Saturday, April 28, 2012

MCSAC has never assessed this event. The Grand Parade steps off at 6:30 PM. It is one of the largest parades on the Suncoast with over 150 illuminated entries. The parade route starts at Manatee High School, goes west on Ninth Avenue, north along 39th Street West to Manatee Avenue and then turns east toward Downtown Bradenton to Ninth Street West.

Sincerely,

Sharon Kramer
Manatee County Substance Abuse Coalition