



The National Center on  
Addiction and Substance Abuse  
at Columbia University

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**CHILDREN WHO HAVE FREQUENT FAMILY DINNERS  
LESS LIKELY TO USE MARIJUANA, TOBACCO, AND  
DRINK ALCOHOL**

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**SEPTEMBER 22 MARKS 8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FAMILY DAY,  
CASA\* LAUNCHES NEW TOOLS TO HELP CELEBRATE**

**NEW YORK, NY September 15, 2008** – From 2003 to 2008 research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University has consistently found that children who have frequent family dinners are less likely to use marijuana, tobacco and drink alcohol.

CASA research reveals that compared to children who have frequent family dinners (five or more per week), children who have infrequent family dinners (less than three per week) are two and a half times likelier to have used marijuana and tobacco, and one and a half times likelier to have drunk alcohol.

Teens Who Have Used Substances By Frequency of Family Dinners (Average over 6 years: 2003-2008)		
	0-2 Dinners/Week	5-7 Dinners/Week
Ever Used Alcohol	48%	30%
Ever Used Tobacco	29%	13%
Ever Used Marijuana	27%	11%

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Monday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> will mark CASA’s eighth annual *Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children<sup>TM</sup>* celebration. *Family Day* is a national movement to inform parents that the parental engagement fostered during frequent family dinners is an effective tool to help keep America’s children substance free and reminds parents that “Dinner Makes A Difference!”

“If you asked me based on CASA’s 16 years of intensive examination of substance abuse and addiction in our nation what’s the most effective thing we can do to curb this scourge and protect our children, I would say parental engagement. And there is no more effective example of this than frequent family dinners,” said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA’s chairman and president and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. “Years of surveying teens have consistently shown that the more often they have dinner with their parents, the less likely they are to smoke, drink and use drugs.”

\*The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University is neither affiliated with, nor sponsored by, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (also known as "CASA") or any of its member organizations, or any other organizations with the name of "CASA".



### **Proclamations and *Family Day* Chairs**

President George W. Bush, the Governors of all 50 states and more than 800 cities and counties are expected to proclaim and support *Family Day* in 2008 as they have in the past.

First Lady Maria Shriver, Honorary Chair of *Family Day* in California will host a *Family Day* event on Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup> to honor military families at the Miramar Base in San Diego. The First Lady is encouraging California's schools, museums and families to celebrate *Family Day*.

First Lady Nancy Freudenthal, Honorary Chair of *Family Day* in Wyoming will spearhead celebrations in Wyoming where they have created a Quest Through the West Family Night Game that includes suggested dinner talking points and cards to encourage families to share a meal.

### **New Tools to Help Celebrate**

In August CASA launched a new public service awareness campaign created by Avrett Free Ginsberg, a marketing communications company that is part of The Interpublic Group. Designed to tug at the heart strings of parents, the radio and TV PSAs are centered on a child's growth chart that parents use to measure their children's height. It starts with whimsical statistics that speak to a child's innocence and progresses to more alarming statistics about a teen's risk of substance abuse. The spot ends with a voiceover from CASA board member Jamie Lee Curtis sharing the hopeful message that "Dinner Makes A Difference!"

This year CASA introduced a major call to action for parents--the *Family Day* STAR Pledge--which encourages parents all across the nation to take back their seats at the dinner table. To pledge to be a *Family Day* STAR click on the pledge button on [www.CASAFamilyDay.org](http://www.CASAFamilyDay.org). A *Family Day* STAR commits to:

- S - Spend** time with my kids by having dinner together.
- T - Talk** to them about their friends, interests and the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- A - Answer** their questions and listen to what they say.
- R - Recognize** that I have the power to help keep my kids substance-free!

CASA created a Family Dinner Kit that includes placemats and menu cards that children can decorate, plus recipes, and conversation starter questions that can be downloaded for free and used during family meals.

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, CASA and the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) will launch a national coloring contest available to all school age children. Children from pre-school through grade twelve will be asked to illustrate what their family dinner means to them. Four winners will be selected and the winning art will be posted on the *Family Day* website and used in CASA's 2009 *Family Day* campaign.

The PSAs, STAR pledge, Family Dinner Kit and contest placemats (and official rules) are all available at [www.CASAFamilyDay.org](http://www.CASAFamilyDay.org).

### ***Family Day* Celebrations**

*Family Day* Media Partner TV Land will be airing family dinner themed programming from 6-7 P.M. on *Family Day*.

CBS Cares will air a network PSA promoting the importance of family dinners with Angus T. Jones, star of the hit CBS sitcom "Two and a Half Men".



Six Major League Baseball teams are celebrating *Family Day* 2008. The Boston Red Sox will hold a pre-game ceremony at Fenway Park where a family will sing the national anthem and throw out the first pitch, and promote *Family Day* throughout the game. The Arizona Diamondbacks are holding a *Family Day* awareness night at Chase Field on Friday, September 26. The San Diego Padres, Oakland Athletics, Los Angeles Dodgers and Cincinnati Reds will all be airing the *Family Day* PSA or running a *Family Day* message on their scoreboards.

*Family Day* Signature Sponsor Willis Group Holdings and its Chairman and CEO Joe Plumeri will create a digital book containing artwork, illustrations, photos, poems and short stories created by children and young relatives of Willis Group associates.

*Family Day* Signature Sponsor National Amusements, Inc. and its President Shari Redstone will hold “Dinner and a Movie” events in their theaters in White Plains, NY, Fairfax, VA, and Randolph, MA.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and its President and CEO Thomas J. Donohue and the AFL-CIO and its President John J. Sweeney are longstanding CASA supporters. Both have been actively engaged in *Family Day* since the first celebration in 2001. In addition, the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) and The Partnership for a Drug-Free America are spreading the message that “Dinner Makes A Difference!”

Niagara Falls, the LaSalle Wacker Building in Chicago and the Oklahoma State Capitol Dome will light up in red and blue on *Family Day*.

“Parents who make every day *Family Day* are taking a positive step toward raising children who are emotionally and physically healthy, academically successful, and drug and alcohol free,” said Kathleen Ferrigno, CASA’s Director of Marketing.

“Family dinners do make a difference. America's drug problem is not going to be solved in courtrooms or legislative hearing rooms by judges and politicians. It will be solved in living rooms and dining rooms and across kitchen tables – by parents and families,” said Califano. “It has less to do with the food on the plate and more to do with what is happening at the table. Gathering each night lets children know that their parents are available to them and it serves as a simple and powerful way to foster an excellent parent/child relationship.”

Sponsors of the 2008 *Family Day* initiative are--MealsTogether.com, International Luxury Media, The Safeway Foundation, American Express Company, Hearst Corporation, The Interpublic Group, JPMorgan Chase & Co., National Amusements, Inc., Willis Group Holdings, Xerox Corporation, The J.M. Smucker Company, Texas Roadhouse, Tyson Refrigerated Dinner Meats, The Coca-Cola Company, Del Monte Foods, General Mills, Macy’s, Shop Rite, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Verizon Communications, Acosta Sales and Marketing Company and La Famiglia DelGrosso.

CASA is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat all types of substance abuse as they affect all aspects of society. CASA has issued 66 reports and white papers, published one book, conducted demonstration projects focused on children, families and schools at 212 sites in 84 cities and counties in 32 states plus Washington, DC and a Native American tribal reservation, and has been testing the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment, in a variety of programs and drug courts.

For more information about *Family Day*, visit [www.CASAFamilyDay.org](http://www.CASAFamilyDay.org).