

**A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research**

University of Maryland at College Park\*

***UMCP Student Athletes Counsel Grade School Youth  
on the Dangers of Substance Abuse  
by  
Wanda Lauer***

At the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP), a unique outreach program, Team Maryland, is making its mark on Maryland elementary, middle and high school students. Team Maryland is composed of scholar athletes from UMCP who visit schools across the state and share their personal experiences. In doing so, the athletes become role models and mentors for their younger contemporaries.

The concept of Team Maryland originated two years ago when Dr. Georgia Sorenson, director of UMCP's Center for Political Leadership and Participation, conducted a study of transformational leadership. Dr. Sorenson discovered a strong link between athletic involvement and leadership ability. In addition, she found that "successful mentoring is a minicourse in leadership . . . College kids are never looked to as experts or leaders. Their leadership is never acknowledged." She resolved to remedy this.

According to Dr. Sorenson, the scholar athletes and the young people they mentor make a perfect team since "research shows that young people will only hear a message from someone who is no more than eight years older than themselves."

As mentors, the student athletes attempt to promote the Team's message, "You Can Make It Happen." By sharing personal experiences, such as tales of family members or friends who abused drugs or alcohol, the Team Maryland members emphasize the importance of self-esteem, education, and setting goals. The aim of the program is to provide each young person with the ability to make sound decisions in life.

For more information concerning Team Maryland, contact Matt Haas at (301) 405-7954.

SOURCE: Gregory, Lisa. Team Maryland. University of Maryland at College Park Alumni Magazine, 1993, 4 (3), 12-17.

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