

## Will You be a *Family Day* STAR?

**Submitted by Deanna Felts, M.S.**

**Seven Counties Services Regional Prevention Center**

When I was growing up, we knew dinner was on the table by 6:00 p.m. We always ate together as a family every night (except when my brother had practice for basketball or baseball, my sister with orchestra and plays and me with track or softball). Even with our extracurricular activities, we ate together more often than not. It was a time of talking with each other about our day at school, work, friends, family etc.

When I was doing my student teaching, I had my 9<sup>th</sup> graders keep a journal of what they ate and when for one week. It was amazing to see. I remember polling the students to see how many ate with their family. Many did not. They rarely saw each other, let alone took time to eat together. That pulled at me. I felt they didn't have the family connection I enjoyed and took for granted.

There is value in eating together. According to CASA (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse), frequent family dining is associated with lower rates of teen smoking, underage drinking, illegal drug use and prescription drug abuse. Joseph Califano, Jr., Chairman and President of CASA, states, "no one has more power to prevent kids from using substances than parents. There are no silver bullets unfortunately; the tragedy of a child's substance abuse can strike any family. But one factor that does more to reduce teens' substance abuse risk than almost any other is parental engagement, and one of the simplest and most effective ways for parents to be engaged in teens' lives is by having frequent family dinners."

On Monday, September 28, 2009, CASA is promoting Family Day. It is a national initiative to remind parents that what your kids really want at the dinner table is YOU. Pledge now to celebrate Family Day – A day to eat dinner with your children on Monday, September 28, 2009. Join parents all across the country by logging onto [www.casafamilyday.org](http://www.casafamilyday.org) to take the Family Day STAR Pledge to commit 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!

My husband I try to have dinner together with our kids every night. It is not easy and it is a struggle at times with our jobs. A few weeks ago, I was out of town and my husband took our daughter on a date night. They were sharing about their day, when my daughter looked up and told him that she loved him. What a wonderful bonding time they had and I'm sure they will both remember it for a long time.

For a new and exciting opportunity to help our young people become involved in efforts to reduce underage drinking, log onto [www.reelactionky.com](http://www.reelactionky.com).