

# conversation starters

FALL 2024

The newsletter of PreventEd

## New Leadership, Growth, and the Future of PreventEd

By Jenny Armbruster



**Jenny Armbruster**  
Interim Executive  
Director

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of our community, effective leadership continues to be essential to the success of our mission. This year, PreventEd has experienced significant changes to our leadership. After 17 years on the PreventEd team, I started as the Interim Executive Director in July, excited to continue my dedication to our mission, to work with our incredible team of passionate individuals, and

lead PreventEd in creating more change in our communities. Soon after I started, we brought on two new individuals to our leadership team: Adam McBride as our Director of Advocacy and J.P. Johnson as our Director of Development (see inside the newsletter to meet Adam and J.P.!). While change like this can feel daunting, it also brings opportunities for growth, innovation, and renewed commitment to our goals.

Over the last 17 years I have been involved with PreventEd, changes have occurred frequently. This is what has helped keep me engaged, knowing that each day will bring something a little different and the need to adapt will continue. The constant among the changes has been PreventEd's dedication to serving our community. Our programs prioritize preventing and reducing the harm of substance use, and this is what we remain focused on. We do not try to do everything for everyone and strive for collaboration with our partners. We continue to show up...in schools, communities, and for all the people we serve.

Along with our changes in leadership this year, we have seen many positive changes from the continued focus and work of our team. The number of schools and students we serve has increased back to pre-pandemic levels. Recent data shared from UMSL's Addiction Science Team reports decreases in overdose fatalities in the region. We have also been able to engage with more community coalitions and form more strategic partnerships.

I do appreciate that change can present challenges such as shifts in responsibilities, new supervisor relationships, and adjustments in some routines. The Board of Directors and all my co-workers at PreventEd have been supportive as we navigate these areas, look to the future, and plan for the impactful work coming in 2025.

With our growing team, continued passion for the work, and tangible progress in our programs and communities, we are filled with hope and excitement as we embark on this journey of transformation. Change is not merely a challenge; it's an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to our mission and to each other. Together, we can build a more resilient and effective PreventEd, ready to respond to the substance use issues that matter most in our community.

Thank you for being a vital part of our journey. I look forward to sharing more updates as we enter the new year and celebrate PreventEd's 60th Anniversary in 2025! 🗨️

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# Advocacy: Building on the PreventEd Legacy

By Adam McBride



**Adam McBride**  
Director of Advocacy

To say I'm excited to join the PreventEd team and be a part of this mission would be an understatement. The work of PreventEd captured my attention since the moment I first learned of it, and the feeling that I needed to be part of this effort never left.

As a new member of the PreventEd team, in a newly-created position, I believe it's important to reflect on what advocacy means, what it can achieve, and how it can contribute to the strength of the organization. According to the Webster Dictionary, an advocate is "one who supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group." Synonyms include promote, champion, endorse, and support. These aptly describe the work I, and you, are charged with daily for the benefit of those PreventEd serves — engaging with policymakers, bureaucrats, substance use prevention stakeholders, and community partners. Advocacy work is both familiar and exciting to me, on a personal and professional level. I can confidently say that PreventEd's mission is the most meaningful I've had the pleasure to be a part of.

Successful advocacy will continue to position PreventEd as a leader in substance use prevention, education, and recovery. This work has always been part of PreventEd's story, but this new role will ensure that someone is fully dedicated to raising awareness, building relationships, and influencing public policy and budgetary decisions that support our work. The desired outcome? More opportunities for PreventEd to positively affect lives in both familiar and innovative ways.

Each of you has a role in advocacy. Whether you realize it or not, you advocate for the causes you care about every day. You promote, endorse, and support a variety of great initiatives. Some advocacy is visible, like sharing the importance of PreventEd's work with friends, family, and your elected leaders. Other efforts, like supporting your school district's bond measure with a yard sign or promoting the benefits of a community garden at a neighborhood meeting may be more subtle, but are nevertheless impactful. My point is that advocacy comes naturally to you. It should feel easy, rewarding, and authentic.

I'm eager to collaborate with my PreventEd colleagues, the Board of Directors, our partners, policymakers, and community members like you to advance our reach. Together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference and continue to equip our friends, neighbors, and youth with the tools and resources for successful and fulfilling lives. 🍷



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## Welcome, J.P. Johnson, Director of Development!



**What do you do in your role at PreventEd?**

I oversee the Development Department which is responsible for generating diversified revenue for the organization and assisting donors to achieve their philanthropic goals.

**What is your favorite part about working at PreventEd?**

The people. PreventEd - as an integrated ecosystem of employees, clients, partners, volunteers, and donors who support our agency's mission - is sincere in making a difference in the lives of their communities in the Eastern Region of Missouri.

**What is your "why" behind your work at PreventEd?**

Our shared community has been continually and inimically impacted by substance and alcohol use in myriad ways, which can be destabilizing to individuals, families, and communities. As someone who can offer attestations, I am in a position to lend grace and guidance for anyone seeking a path forward - whether that be abstaining from that which brings harm, charting a new frontier for their futures, and anything in between that leads to a healthier, happier life. My role at PreventEd empowers me to foster relationships, steward resources, and direct growth for that aforementioned purpose. 🍷

# Empowering Young Leaders: A Journey to the National Youth Summit

By Emma Wilson

This September, we had the incredible opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., where we proudly nominated four remarkable teens from our community—Reese R., Sritha R., Vinu J., and Molly T.—to participate in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) inaugural National Youth Summit. These young leaders have already engaged in substance misuse prevention and mental health advocacy in St. Louis and Jefferson Counties.

At the summit, our teens didn’t just sit back and listen; they jumped right into the action, connecting with other teens from across the nation (as far as Alaska!). Imagine the energy in the room as they shared their insights and experiences! The summit began by diving deep into SAMHSA’s critical mission to tackle substance misuse and mental health challenges across the country.

The conversation continued into engaging breakout sessions, during which our students identified pressing issues affecting their communities directly. Reese, Sritha, Vinu, Molly, and their groupmates highlighted the urgent need for improved mental health education in schools—not just for students but also for educators. Through brainstorming and strategic planning, they crafted actionable solutions that reflected their respective school communities’ unique needs. As the summit concluded, our teens took the stage as a participatory action team, presenting innovative strategies to foster mental wellness in schools. Their ideas included:

- **Integrating Mental Health Education:** Proposing enhancements to current school curricula to better equip students and staff.
- **Training for Educators:** Advocating for training that helps teachers recognize and respond to mental health concerns.
- **Peer Support Groups:** Creating safe spaces within schools where students can support one another.

This experience was transformative, empowering our young leaders to contribute meaningfully to the national dialogue on mental health and substance misuse prevention. We couldn’t be prouder of their dedication and passion for making a positive impact. For many of them, this was their first flight and their first opportunity to connect with students from outside Missouri. These experiences are not just milestones; they are stepping stones toward becoming the changemakers of tomorrow. We believe in their potential and look forward to supporting their ongoing efforts in our community. Let’s celebrate these future leaders and the difference they are destined to make! 📌



# Why I Give to PreventEd

By Angie Winschel



I first met the crew at PreventEd several years ago when my firm worked with them to strategically rebrand to align how they looked and sounded with the work they had already been doing. The team's unwavering commitment to the power of prevention and their courage to not only lean into, but to take the lead in difficult conversations, connected powerfully with me. Later, as I was asked to join the Marketing Committee and then the Board of Directors, I was happy to deepen my understanding of their work and contribute however was helpful. Now, I'm thrilled to be able to share why I support their mission and work.

As a daughter, sister, wife, mom, and friend, I've grown into the belief that our relationships exist to help us become the best versions of ourselves. All the work that PreventEd does encourages and supports connection, relationships, and

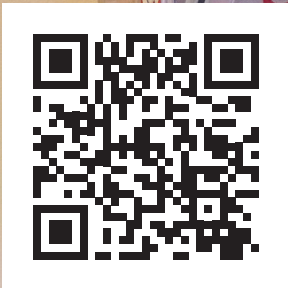
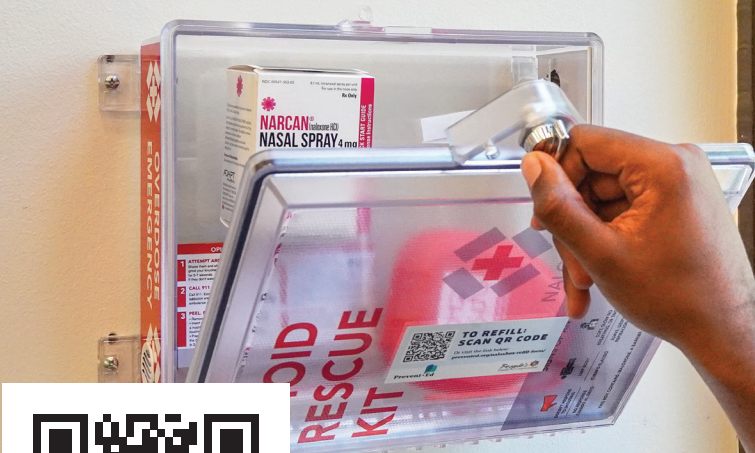
human interaction as the key to preventing substance misuse and building healthier communities. From the resilience-focused school-based prevention education programs, to the honest and accepting peer support for people navigating recovery, PreventEd invests in the power of relationships. More than any other intervention, I believe this work makes a difference and saves lives.

We all know and love people who struggle with substance misuse, and it's hard to know how to help. PreventEd is actively changing the way society views substance misuse and is leading the way toward communities and connections that can support everyone along their journeys. Supporting PreventEd strengthens kids, families, and communities, and saves lives. That's why I give. 🗨️

## Give today.

Our donors understand the consequences of substance use disorder, and invest their resources to help us prevent and reduce the harms of alcohol and other drug use.

**Scan the QR code to give.**



# Your gift changes the lives of people in need.

**\$10**

Provides informational handouts on a drug-specific topic (i.e. - cannabis, energy drinks, vaping, or alcohol) distributed at a community health fair or other presentation.

**\$600**

Provides one teen the opportunity to participate in PreventEd's Teen Institute leadership retreat and other leadership engagement opportunities throughout the year.

**\$50**

Covers the cost of a substance use assessment.

**\$1,600**

Provides eight classroom school-based prevention presentations.

**\$150**

Provides two Narcan rescue kits to be used for an opioid overdose.



## 2024 Stomp Out Addiction Walk

The 2024 Stomp Out Addiction Walk was a success! On Sunday, October 13th, over 500 supporters gathered at Faith Oakville to walk two miles to raise awareness and support people who are struggling with substance misuse. We are so grateful for a community full of individuals who believe in our mission. Thank you for walking with us, and thank you to Faith Oakville for putting on a great event. Together with our donors, sponsors, and resource partners, our community truly came together to make a difference! 🇺🇸

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Please visit our website for the most up-to-date event information and registration: [prevented.org/events](https://prevented.org/events)

