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## Keeping Children Safe During the Summer Months

By Adrienne Marcus, Ph.D.

With summer in full swing, children throughout the county are enjoying relaxing days away from school and school-year activities. Parents and caregivers welcome summer's looser structure, and children enjoy having extra free time on their hands. Unfortunately, though, children



are more likely to engage in risky behaviors like substance use during the lazy summer months.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) found that summer is the time of the greatest rise in first-time marijuana use. The Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) notes that first-time use of marijuana increases by 40% in June and July. Additionally, teens who are not closely monitored by

their parents or who are bored are also more likely to use marijuana.

The danger lies not only in alcohol and illicit drugs but in other readily available products. Inhalants like aerosol cleaners, butane, and gasoline are easy and inexpensive for teens to obtain. Despite their accessibility, they can be just as dangerous as illegal drugs and alcohol.

Substance abuse puts a youth's health at serious risk. Marijuana, a "gateway" drug that can lead to use of other drugs, affects coordination, sense of time, and ability to drive safely. It contains cancer-causing compounds, may be laced with other dangerous drugs, and can be addictive.

Alcohol affects the brain by impairing coordination, judgment, vision, memory, and reflexes. For young adults with a driver's

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## Saudi Takeover of GE Plastics Flies Under Radar

By Diane M. Grassi



The announcement on May 21, 2007 that the largest public company in the Middle East, by market value, would be acquiring a division of the world's second-largest corporation, by market value, and based in the United States, could not have been any less publicized. But in the world of corporate governance, the largest transaction ever completed in the Persian Gulf, seemingly trumps all laws of reason.

However, there is little precedence established for a foreign owned totalitarian government controlled corporation acquiring a corporate entity in the U.S. Such brings us to the General Electric Co. and the sale of its GE Plastics, based in Pittsfield, MA. It has been one of its most successful divisions for over half a century. It includes numerous U.S.-based manufacturing plants and research and development offices, with additional locations spanning 20 countries. Employees total nearly 11,000 worldwide, with several thousand located in the U.S. New operational control, however, will be via offices in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Basic Industries Corporation, known in the Middle

East as SABIC, is one of the world's 10 largest petrochemical manufacturers and is 70% owned by the Saudi Arabian government, controlled by the Royal Saudi Kingdom and 5 other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, including private Middle Eastern investors.

It employs approximately 17,000, worldwide, and shortly expects to be the new owner of GE Plastics in the U.S.

After GE Plastics was put on the market in January 2007, it got bids from Apollo Management, Inc., a U.S.-based private equity firm as well as Bassell, a Netherlands-based Access Industries plastics maker.

Both proposed bids of GE Plastics were upwards of \$10 billion. But it was the Saudi Arabian's offer of \$11.6 billion in cash and the promise of future energy ventures

with its parent company, GE, which gave SABIC the upper hand in the acquisition of GE Plastics.

Wall Street portfolio managers will like those opposed to this deal, still pending approval by the U.S. government through the Committee on Foreign Investments in the U.S. (CFIUS), as protectionist, nativist and alarmist. And the U.S. has seen propositions like this before recently, such as the Bush Administration's desire in 2005 to allow foreign ownership of U.S. airlines; the proposal by the People's Republic of China's state-owned CNOOC in the summer of 2005 to acquire UNOCAL of California, the ninth largest oil company in the U.S.; Dubai Ports World, of Dubai Holding, a United Arab Emirates (UAE) government-owned corporation, and its buyout of the United Kingdom corporation, Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Co. (P&O), for its port operations of six major U.S. East Coast ports in early 2006.

All of the aforementioned never came to pass, after much Congressional and public opposition, although the Bush

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## Business • Health

### Keeping Children Safe During the Summer Months

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license, these are imperative skills needed for safe driving. Organs like the liver can be damaged by alcohol, and drinking increases risk of cancer. Because alcohol lowers inhibitions, drinking can also lead to risky behaviors like unprotected sex.

New York State is helping to keep kids safe by cracking down on under-21 drivers who drive while impaired. Its "Zero Tolerance" Law applies to persons under age 21 who operate a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .02% or more. Drivers under age 21 who are apprehended by the police for drinking are subject to a license suspension, monetary penalties and fees, and driver's license points.

Parents and caregivers can do their part to keep their children safe by helping them find enjoyable, productive summer activities that involve sports, activities, volunteering, work, or education.

Sports opportunities may be as close as the local city's ball field. Many municipal parks departments sponsor summer baseball and softball leagues that may be open to teens. Teens also may be able to help coach younger ball players. Golf offers children the opportunity to develop discipline, patience, and social skills, along with mastery of a versatile sport. Youth bowlers can participate in summer bowling leagues. Town and county pools often oversee swim and diving teams that compete against area teams and need both coaches and swimmers.

Summer is the perfect time for personal or home projects. Teens may enjoy creating online or handmade photo albums from their or the family's photographs. Summer crafts can include quilting, making stationery or building and decorating a bird house. Discuss sharing larger household projects like building a new fence, cultivating a vegetable garden,

### Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among Teens is Problematic in Westchester County

• In 2002, youth drug arrests for Westchester County increased 19% over the year 2000. (Source: *Prevention Risk Indicator Services Monitoring System for Alcohol and Drug Abuse - Westchester County - 2005*)

• In 2006, more than 14% of youths aged 12-18 were admitted to a drug abuse or alcoholism program. (Source: *New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services*)

• From 2001 to 2004, there was a 400% increase for the number of adolescents (aged 12-17) admitted to a crisis services program. (Source: *Community Response Indicators for Improving Services System Performance - Westchester County - 2005*)

Of the 76,886 youths aged 12-17 in Westchester County (Source: *US Census Bureau*), 13,301 are chemically dependent. This represents 17.3% of that age range's population. (Source: *1998 NYS School Survey, 1994 Adult Household Study, 1998 NYS Heroin Study; applied to 2004 population*)

painting the house or redecorating.

Many teens enjoy volunteerism as a way to give back to their community. A local hospital or eldercare facility may welcome younger volunteers to bring cheer to their patients and residents. Animal lovers can look into working at the local animal shelter or a nearby farm. Town officials who employ summer interns offer the opportunity to learn the inner workings of local government. Soup kitchens and food banks always need extra hands. The local library may want volunteers to help read to young children or teach English to non-native English speakers.

Money matters to teens. In addition to babysitting or working at a fast food outlet, potential summer jobs for teens include filing papers at a parent's or family friend's office, dog walking, pet sitting, lawn mowing, or setting up a business that utilizes a talent, including photography, computer lessons, or computer set-up.

Although teens eagerly anticipate their break from school, some may enjoy the more relaxed pace of summer learning. SAT preparation courses, driver's education, cooking class, and foreign language instruction are perfectly suited for summer. Other classes can be explored purely for fun, like dance, yoga, guitar, and painting.

With a little creativity and research into local resources, parents and caregivers can do their part to keep children busy and safe over the summer.

Adrienne Marcus, Ph.D., is executive director and founder of Lexington Center for Recovery (LCR), one of the largest providers of alcoholism and substance abuse treatment in the Hudson Valley. LCR has treated approximately 30,000 people in its 25-year history and has 16 distinct programs throughout Westchester and Dutchess counties.

For additional information, call Dr. Marcus at 914.666.0191 or visit [www.lexingtonctr.org](http://www.lexingtonctr.org).