

This year in professional baseball there weren't as many home runs as there have been the past few years. Many analysts think they know why: random drug testing. They think when drug tests of ballplayers increased, their drug usage decreased, their muscle mass lessened, and fewer balls made it over the back wall.

Local schools are considering the idea of testing for student drug usage. The theory is that if kids don't know when they might be tested, they will use drugs less. It's a good theory, but of course there is more to stopping drug abuse than random testing.

Drug abuse among teens is serious. A recent national survey of 12 to 17 year-olds asked this question: Can you buy marijuana in an hour or less? 20% of the teens said yes. Another 19% said they not in an hour, but they could buy marijuana in less than a day. Over half the students nationally said drugs are used, kept or sold at their high school. Some of the risk factors among teens are stress, boredom and cash. Teens who rate themselves highly stressed are more likely to try alcohol and tobacco. Kids who are bored will too. Kids with more affluence are more likely to use drugs. A lot of people think drug usage is a bigger problem among the poor, but very few kids with even \$15 of spending money a week have tried marijuana. Of teens with \$50 or more spending money a week, 1 in 3 have tried it.

Random drug testing may act as a deterrent, but there is more the community can do. Parents have a tremendous impact when they stay involved in the lives of their teens. They can help monitor the amount of spending money kids have. And we can all help teens relieve stress and overcome boredom with more positive things to do. Happily, according to the same national survey, teens who attend weekly religious services are at a reduced risk of substance abuse.

Kids face pressure from their peers. A teen who takes a stand against illicit drugs may be taunted by peers, excluded from groups, and shunned by other kids they thought they'd like to know better. It's hard, and those kids deserve the support of our community.

The prophet Isaiah speaks about a servant of God who is crushed with suffering. But God says, "Through suffering, my servant shall justify many, and shall bear their guilt." When kids and adults resist the temptations of peers, they suffer for it. But their suffering makes them strong, impresses others people by the strength of their conviction and pleases God.