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March 2, 2026

Straight Talk

Welcome to the latest edition of the **Steered Straight Newsletter**—and to a defining moment in our mission.

As we move boldly into 2026, our purpose remains clear but more urgent than ever: to educate, inspire, and empower young people to make positive, life-changing choices. That mission hasn't changed—but it has intensified. And we have no plans of stopping.

Across the country, Michael DeLeon and the Steered Straight team continue to stand on the front lines, reaching communities, families, and young people who need truth, hope, and direction now more than ever. This year, Michael has even more reason to fight—and that fight fuels everything we do.

We are deeply grateful to have you with us on this journey. Your support makes this work possible, and in 2026, we are asking you to stand with Michael, with Steered Straight, and with every life we are committed to impacting. Together, we will continue to inform, educate, and inspire—relentlessly.



Straight Talk: If You Wait for a Problem, You've Missed the Window

Too many adults assume that nothing is wrong until there's an obvious crisis. That's exactly the mistake the first few months of a new year invite.

Teens rarely send clear warnings. Coping-driven behaviors, subtle withdrawal, and low-level risk patterns often fly under the radar. By the time a problem is obvious — slipping grades, disciplinary issues, emotional meltdowns — the window to intervene early has usually closed.

This season isn't about panic or assuming the worst. It's about paying attention when the signs are quiet, subtle, and easy to explain away. It's about acting *before* small coping patterns become entrenched.

If you're waiting for drama to tell you something's wrong, you're already behind. January, February, and March are about noticing patterns, asking questions, and staying engaged — *before consequences force your hand*.

On the blog, [How to Intervene Early Without Overreacting](#) I break down exactly how to intervene early without overreacting, what real support looks like in this phase, and why timing matters more than severity — so you can act before it's too late.

- Michael DeLeon

Founder, Steered Straight

Road Warrior



How the Miles Make a Difference

Thank you so much Principal Donna Newby for having us present to your students. It's been such a pleasure to serve you! What a blessed day.

Friends, call me & let's get your school booked today...Prevention is key!

Steered Straight #drugs #vaping #vape #kidsmatter

[🔗 steeredstraight.org](https://steeredstraight.org)

📞 615-896-5718

Michael proclaimed "MY LIFE CHANGED TODAY! MY WORLD WAS MADE BETTER TODAY! HUNDREDS OF KIDS LIFTED UP MY SOULD TODAY!!! I WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!!!"

Steered Straight

In The News

A growing number of families and prevention advocates are raising red flags as **Applebee's Grill + Bar** tests cannabis-infused cocktails in its traditionally family-friendly restaurants. Critics warn that mixing THC drinks with alcohol service — without proper training or safeguards — could create serious safety risks and turn a casual night out into a public health hazard.

March 1, 2026

By Jennifer Timmerberg

Community Alarm Grows as Applebee's Tests Cannabis-Infused Cocktails in Family Dining Spaces

A growing wave of concern is spreading through communities as **Applebee's Grill + Bar** experiments with cannabis-infused cocktails in select locations — a move critics say threatens to blur the line between casual family dining and recreational drug use.

For decades, Applebee's has marketed itself as the neighborhood spot for affordable meals, youth sports celebrations, and family nights out. But the introduction of THC-laced beverages with beachy, playful names like *High Tide*, *Cloud Nine Colada*, and *Hazy Paradise Punch* has many parents and prevention advocates asking whether the company has forgotten who its core customers are.

To opponents, the issue isn't trendy menus or adult choice. It's public safety.

A Family Environment Meets Psychoactive Drinks

On any given evening, children fill booths with coloring sheets while parents order burgers and soft drinks. Critics argue that placing cannabis cocktails on the same menu normalizes a psychoactive drug in front of minors and sends a troubling message that THC is just another casual refreshment.

"What used to feel like a safe, family place now feels like something else entirely," said one local parent. "This isn't a bar district or a dispensary lounge — it's where kids celebrate birthdays."

Prevention experts warn that visibility matters. When cannabis products appear in everyday spaces, especially restaurants associated with families, teens may perceive them as low risk.

Servers Aren't Trained for This

Beyond image concerns lies what many call the most dangerous issue of all: restaurant staff are not trained to assess cannabis intoxication.

Alcohol service comes with decades of guidelines. Bartenders learn to spot slurred speech, loss of coordination, and other clear signs of impairment. THC, however, affects each person differently. The onset can be delayed, symptoms can be subtle, and impairment isn't always obvious until it's severe.

Mixing THC with alcohol only compounds the risk.

"There's no reliable way for a server to judge who's too high or how cannabis is interacting with alcohol," said one safety advocate. "You can't look at someone and know."

Unlike alcohol, there is no quick breath test or standardized measure of cannabis impairment at the table. Critics say expecting busy servers to manage that responsibility is unrealistic and unsafe.

Delayed Effects, Bigger Risks

Cannabis beverages can take 30 minutes or longer to fully take effect. That delay increases the chance of overconsumption, as customers may order more drinks believing nothing is happening — only to feel the full impact all at once.

The result can be dizziness, confusion, nausea, or severe impairment.

Now imagine that scenario on a crowded Friday night in a noisy restaurant filled with families and rushed staff. Opponents say it's a recipe for trouble.

Impaired driving after dinner, medical emergencies, and unpredictable behavior are all risks communities may be forced to absorb.

"A Bomb Waiting to Explode"

For many critics, combining alcohol service, psychoactive cannabis, and a family-centered restaurant environment isn't innovation — it's negligence.

They describe the concept as "a bomb waiting to explode," not necessarily through one headline-making disaster, but through small, preventable harms that accumulate: a crash on the drive home, a customer who becomes dangerously disoriented, or young people growing up believing THC cocktails are harmless fun.

Some longtime customers say they simply won't bring their families back if the drinks remain.

"There's a time and a place for everything," one patron said. "A neighborhood grill shouldn't double as a cannabis bar."

As the debate intensifies, Applebee's faces a difficult question: can a brand built on family appeal safely serve psychoactive cocktails — or is it gambling with the trust that made it successful in the first place?

For many concerned parents and community members, the answer feels clear — and the risks feel far too high.

On the Road to Recovery

From Rock Bottom to Recovery Advocate: The Redemption Story of Bob Forrest

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Steered Straight and Recovery Army sat down with Bob Forrest. Bob Forrest's story is one of collapse, survival, and ultimately service to others.

As the frontman for the Los Angeles alternative rock band **Thelonious Monster**, Forrest became known as much for his talent as for his chaos. During the height of the 1980s and '90s music scene, he spiraled into severe heroin and alcohol addiction, cycling through arrests, overdoses, homelessness, and repeated stints in jail and treatment. His substance use derailed his career and nearly cost him his life, leaving many around him expecting he wouldn't survive.

After hitting bottom and facing the very real possibility of death, Forrest committed fully to sobriety. Through long-term recovery and 12-step principles, he rebuilt his life from the ground up — not just staying sober, but dedicating himself to helping others do the same.

Since getting clean, Forrest has become a respected addiction counselor and recovery advocate. He has worked in treatment settings including **Las Encinas Hospital**, helped create recovery programs, and co-founded **Aloe House Recovery**, a structured sober living community in Los Angeles. He also shares his message publicly through speaking, mentoring, media appearances, and the recovery-focused podcast **Dopey**.

Today, Forrest is widely known for using his own hard-earned experience to guide others, proving that even the most severe addiction stories can turn into lives of purpose and service.

To hear his story in his own words please click the photo and link below.

To see more stories of hope and inspiration please visit:

www.recoveryarmy.com



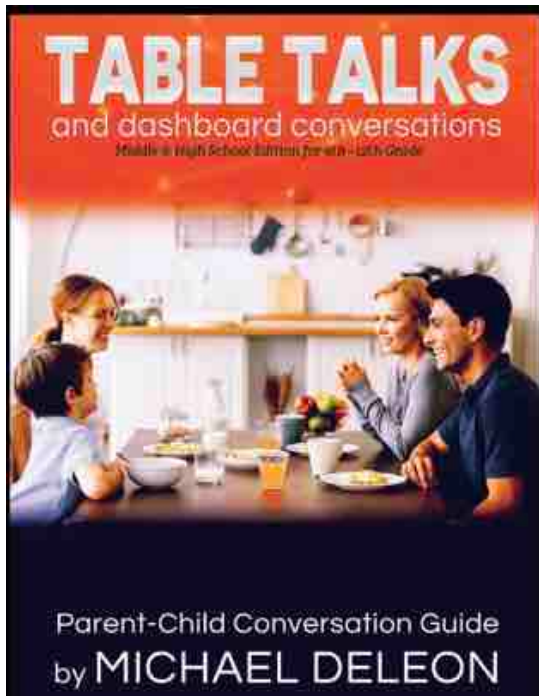
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TABLE TALKS

Michael has created workbooks for parents and children that guide them in managing relationships and discussing difficult topics beyond drug and alcohol abuse. Each month, he focuses on a different subjects and offers many different topics of conversation and activities you can do with your children to help foster that deep connection and communication that is so vital.



Table Talks and Dashboard Conversations is an in-depth conversation guide for parents and kids. You can order through [Amazon](#) or the [Steered Straight website](#).



The Month of March: Perception, Attitudes, Experience

Talking openly with kids about drugs and other substances — not through lectures or scare tactics, but through honest conversations about perceptions, attitudes, and real-life experiences — can be one of the most powerful tools in prevention.

When adults create space for young people to share what they've seen, heard, or felt about substances, it helps correct myths and challenge the idea that “everyone is doing it.” Kids often overestimate how common or harmless drug use is. Discussing the realities — social pressures, health risks, and personal consequences — helps them think critically instead of reacting impulsively.

Just as important, these conversations build trust. When children feel heard rather than judged, they're far more likely to ask questions, seek guidance, and come to a parent, teacher, or mentor before making risky choices. Prevention isn't just about rules — it's about relationships, awareness, and helping kids develop the confidence to say no.

In the end, open dialogue doesn't plant ideas; it plants protection.

Throughout the month we will discuss other ways in which to discuss these topic with your kids in positive and productive way.

Please educate yourself and have these valuable conversations with your kids. It can literally change their lives. Spend this week connecting, educating, and building your kids up. The more we open up with them, the more they will open up to the important adults in their lives.

Headlines We Are Following

<https://www.police1.com/drug-interdiction-narcotics/new-synthetic-opioid-may-resist-naloxone-forensic-officials-warn>

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2026-02-22/mexican-army-kills-leader-of-jalisco-new-generation-cartel-official-says>

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Contact Steered Straight

Michael and his team of professional Steered Straight speakers are eager to meet you in person and make a profound impact on your students, staff, and community. To bring their inspiring message to your next event, contact Steered Straight to schedule.

[**CONTACT STEERED STRAIGHT**](#)

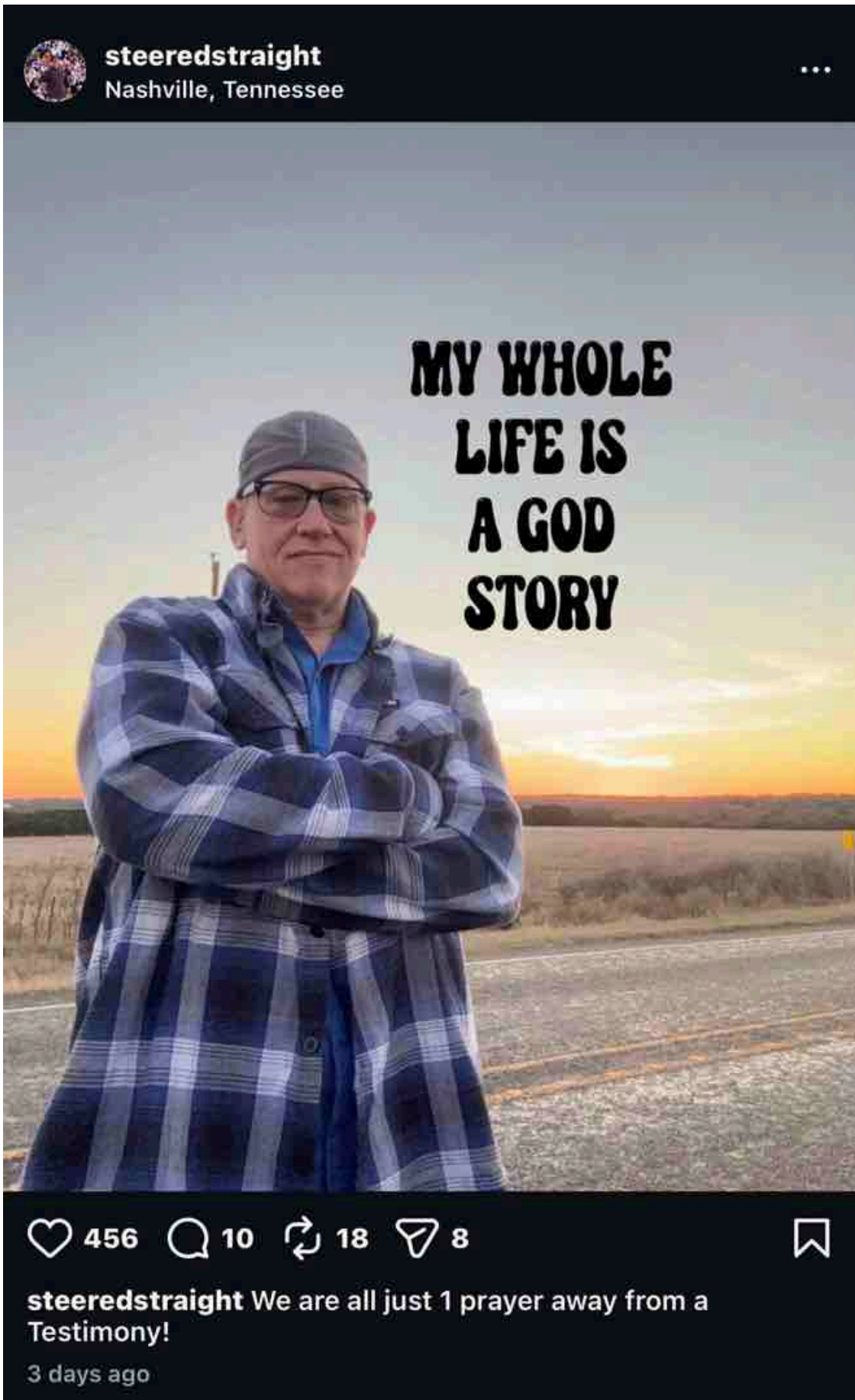


Follow On Social Media



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18K followers



The image shows a Facebook post from the user 'steeredstraight' in Nashville, Tennessee. The post features a photograph of a man with his arms crossed, wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, a grey beanie, and glasses. He is standing on a gravel road with a field and a sunset in the background. The text 'MY WHOLE LIFE IS A GOD STORY' is overlaid on the right side of the photo in a large, bold, black font. Below the photo, the post has 456 likes, 10 comments, 18 shares, and 8 reactions. The caption reads: 'steeredstraight We are all just 1 prayer away from a Testimony! 3 days ago'. There is a bookmark icon in the bottom right corner of the post area.

steeredstraight
Nashville, Tennessee

**MY WHOLE
LIFE IS
A GOD
STORY**

456 10 18 8

steeredstraight We are all just 1 prayer away from a Testimony!
3 days ago







Watch now on TikTok

@steeredstraight

Click on the photo to view the post!

This Instagram post is a reminder from Michael that not just his life is a God story but yours is too! Make it a good one.

TikTok is a reminder that if you believe you can that you are half way there!

Michael DeLeon and the team at Steered Straight are working hard to ensure this generation gets what they need to change the world. No other program like it and no one delivers the message better. All for the kids! Follow Michael and Steered Straight on social media so you don't miss a beat!

#steeredstraight #motivator #explore #advice #drugfree #antivaping #recovery #quitvaping #stayinyourlane



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