

## **Alumna's Research to be highlighted on 'CBS Evening News'**

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The "CBS Evening News" is scheduled to air highlights Monday, Nov. 7, from a study by Alfred University alumna Dr. Madeline A. Dalton's '83 examining preschooler's attitudes, expectations, and perceptions of tobacco and alcohol use. Dalton, a research associate professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School, Lebanon, NH, and director of the Hood Center for Children and Families, was lead author of the study which found that data suggests that observation of adult behavior, especially parental behavior, may influence preschool children to view smoking and drinking as appropriate or normal in social situations. These perceptions may relate to behaviors adopted later in life. "Use of Cigarettes and Alcohol by Preschoolers While Role-playing as Adults" was released in September. One hundred twenty children, aged 2-6, participated individually in the role-playing in the structured observational study. The children used props and dolls to act out a social evening for adults. As part of the role play, each child selected items from a miniature grocery store stocked with 73 different products, including beer, wine, and cigarettes, for an evening with friends. Additional products included vegetables, meat, fruit, candy, milk, desserts, cereal, and medicine. The outcome measure was whether or not a child purchased cigarettes or alcohol at the store. Results showed that children purchased 17 of the 73 products in the store. Thirty-four children bought cigarettes and 74 bought alcohol. Children were more likely to buy cigarettes if their parents smoked. Children were more likely to buy beer or wine if their parents drank alcohol at least monthly. "The percentage of children who bought cigarettes and alcohol was much higher than we expected," said Dalton, who worked with seven others on the study. "But even more surprising was the level of detail with which the children mimicked the use of these products." The study concludes that children are highly attentive to the use and enjoyment of alcohol and tobacco and have well-established expectations about how cigarettes and alcohol fit into social settings, said Dalton. The work was supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The results were published in the Sept. 5, 2005 "Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine." Dalton was also the lead author of a research paper published in The Lancet, a leading journal on medical research, concluding "viewing smoking in movies strongly predicts whether or not adolescents will try smoking." That research, conducted under the auspices of Dartmouth Medical School, Dartmouth College, and the Norris Cotton Cancer Center at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, was funded by the National Cancer Institute.