



Drug & Alcohol Use in our Region (All Stewards meeting) – October 24, 2008

7am – Douglas County Public Works

Attendees: Dr. Terry Quist, Julie Critz, Chad Duwenhoegger, Jeff Restad, Linda Roles, Cindy Bigger, Virgil Batesole, Marty Schultz, Tom Jacobson, Chris Carpan, Dave Robley, Rick Banke, Dave Hengel, Rick Wyffels, Corliss Stark, Marie Duncan, Nancy Klepetka, Greg Klepetka, Dr. Kevin Kopischke, Kris Willert, Reed Becker, Pat Kalina, Stan Finnestad, Coni McKay

Call to order: 7:05am

Information from District 206 (Dr. Terry Quist, Julie Critz, and Chad Duwenhoegger) Provided the group with information on alcohol/drug usage from District 206 – survey results from 6th, 9th, and 12th graders along with information on prevention and intervention practices of the District.

Specific areas of discussion:

- Drug dog usage within District buildings
- Specific activities & involvement direction of Jefferson High School to engage students within the building.
- Information on intervention/education practices of District 206
- District 206 would like to be a part of the solution to drug/alcohol use by students – the District cannot solve the problem but is working on the problem and welcomes any help.

Information from Alexandria Technical College (Dr. Kevin Kopischke & Tam Bukowski)

Provided a brief overview of resources in place and in practice at the college level and spoke about the challenges that colleges face when addressing specifically alcohol since it isn't illegal for students over 21.

ATC does not believe that drug/alcohol use & abuse is a problem on-campus.

Information from City of Alexandria Police Department (Chief Rick Wyffels)

The Alexandria Police Department takes abuse/use cases very seriously within schools and the Alexandria community.

- Officers and the department take an aggressive approach and involve the community in addressing and solving drugs/alcohol problems.

- The Alexandria Police Department is actively involved in fighting the youth drug/alcohol problem and following up on leads.
- Alcohol usage in the Alexandria area has remained at a constant level over the last 5 years (no spikes or sharp declines)
- Changes have been seen in the area of narcotic drug usage:
 - o Meth usage is currently down some in the area
 - o Marijuana is back as the drug of choice in the area
 - o The number of arrests have remained level, but the usage choices have changed based upon cultural changes.
- Law enforcement is limited in what can legally be done to dissuade usage and enforce the law with both youth and adults
- The drug/alcohol problem is much larger than just a youth issue – the majority of drug usage is by adults.
- A strong asset for our community is that we have connections in place and being enforced between organizations and the community
 - o There is a strong passion already in existence to address and solve this problem

Marie Duncan: Contacted some surrounding communities and found that their experiences and statistics were about the same as Alexandria.

Information from the Douglas County Attorney's Office (Chris Carpan)

The Douglas County Attorney's Office takes drug/alcohol offenses very seriously. Mr. Carpan talked to the group about the following topics:

- Public perception: Adults are made more afraid by drug statistics and commercials than youth.
 - o Public perception of situations (including drugs/alcohol & gangs) can become reality if accurate information is not shared with the community.
- Mr. Carpan shared that in his view, the Alexandria & Douglas County community is one of the most homogeneous and fortunate communities he has ever worked in.
 - o Our community has very few serious problems and has a large amount of resources at its disposal to combat the problems (and perceived problems) that we do have.
 - Most communities don't have our resources and have much larger problems than our community.
- Mr. Carpan feels that although drugs/alcohol may not be a "major" problem, it is a problem that should be addressed and worked against so that it doesn't become a "major" problem.
- Corliss Stark: It is important to be aggressive in addressing the smaller problems before they become big problems.
- Cindy Bigger: The community must be prepared and educated about diversity and the challenges that it can bring to the community.
 - o Kevin Kopischke shared that the Diversity Resource Action Alliance program is active and working to address this issue throughout the community.

Specific things the Community/Stewards can do to help address/solve the drug & alcohol problem:

- Engage & connect with youth – be a significant adult in a student’s life.
- Make extracurricular events affordable to all.
 - o Greater involvement of kids in at least one activity.
 - o Address transportation needs to connect kids with activities.
- Encourage citizens to feel comfortable with Law Enforcement and authority figures – approach them with tips and concerns.
- Share information with the community on what is being done to address problems and challenges in the community and share facts and statistics, not perceptions.
 - o Make sure to share information and resources with satellite communities.

Adjourned: 8:35pm