

For Immediate Release

October 30, 2008

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A new approach to peer pressure: local youth groups learn to use social marketing to prevent underage drinking

PLAISTOW – Imagine over 100 teenagers at a rock club thinking up ways to get their peers *not* to drink. That’s what happened this Thursday as youth groups from across Southern and Seacoast New Hampshire gathered at the Sad Café to learn how to use social marketing as a tool to prevent drinking among their peers.

The workshop, sponsored by Allies in Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP), a United Way of the Greater Seacoast funded coalition, began with a presentation on the history and strategies of social marketing from Kim Laramy of Ethos Marketing and Design, including how social marketing was successful in campaigns to increase hand washing, recycle and use car seats.

After learning the ropes, students took on the roles of social marketers and their target audience to develop creative ideas for techniques they could bring back to their schools to help prevent underage substance use and abuse.

Many students, playing the role of target audience, cited absent parents, boredom and a need to fit in as reasons for choosing to drink. Those playing social marketers suggested alternatives to drinking, like joining a sport, finding another rush like energy drinks or skydiving, or talking to peers or teachers as possible ways they could help young people avoid turning to alcohol.

“The great thing about this workshop is that it includes students from across the region,” said Cyndi Desrosiers, ASAP coordinator. “The further this message spreads, the stronger it will be.” Participants included students from Pinkerton Academy, Timberlane High School and Middle School, Winnacunnet, Raymond and Salem High School.

Helping students learn how to influence positive behavior change in one part of ASAP’s larger strategy to create communities that support youth making good decisions.

“Preventing substance use among youth takes more than parents, teachers or laws alone. It’s about everyone in the community working together with our youth to create a message where they’re promoting the fact that despite the perception, most youth do not drink,” Desrosiers said.

Other recent success for ASAP includes the creation of the Substance Abuse Task Force, a growing coalition of law enforcement representatives from across the region working

together to share best practices and resources so that no one town in the region is considered “safe” for hosting underage drinking parties.

ASAP is one of 10 regional coalitions funded in part by the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant for underage alcohol use prevention, coordinated through the state of New Hampshire.