

Local Youth Bureaus Receive National Recognition on Underage Drinking Prevention

From the "Local Online News", in Chester, Deep River, and Essex, CT. 3/16/2010

The billboard of a baby and a beer bottle that received so much attention in the region was put on display in Washington DC last month along with several other elements of the Together We Can Coalition Campaign to Stop Underage Drinking.

The Together We Can Coalition a partnership of three youth service bureaus serving six Middlesex County communities, including Chester, Deep River, and Essex. The group is funded by The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) through a Federal Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant.

The Coalition was one of only twenty groups nation-wide that were invited to present their campaigns at the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America National Conference (CADCA) held in Washington D.C. in February.

"We are proud of the work we've done in our six communities over the last two years and were honored to have our accomplishments recognized at CADCA's national conference," said Toni McCabe, Executive Director of East Haddam Youth and Family Services.

The Together We Can initiative included a media campaign to address the issues of social access and parent and public awareness, Controlled Party Dispersals to enhance enforcement of underage drinking party laws and Training Intervention Procedures (TIPS) for sellers of alcohol designed to instill confidence in participants to intervene in situations so that alcohol is sold legally and responsibly.

"All the elements of the campaign were designed to work together for maximum impact," said Gail Onofrio, Executive Director of Tri-Town Youth Services. "The groundbreaking partnerships we established among our three youth service bureaus and the Connecticut State Police have been the foundation of our work and our success."

The centerpiece of the media campaign was the billboard that has come to be known as 'Beer Bottle Baby.' On the left is a baby with a beer bottle to its mouth; on the right two teenagers surrounded by alcohol in what could be a home. The caption, along with the pictures, drives home an important point: 'You wouldn't do that then...Why Now?'

For additional information on the TWC coalition or how you can join the effort to prevent underage drinking, contact Gail Onofrio, Tri-Town Youth Services (860-526-3600). A tip lines for reporting underage drinking concerns within Chester, Deep River and Essex can be reached at (860) 526-9280 and (860) 767-4340, extension 130.