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News

Liquor purveyors offer TIPS to help curb abuse

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By LISA BACKUS
STAFF WRITER

NEW BRITAIN — One way to curb downtown drunkenness is to spot individuals who've already had too much and refuse to sell booze to them.

That's a lesson city officials and substance abuse providers are hoping will catch on as they stage free training sessions for employees of package stores, bars and other locations that sell alcohol.

"It's about teaching them the signs someone may be chronically ill and purchasing," Mayor Erin Stewart said.

The initiative comes after a Main Street package store came under scrutiny this spring for selling beer and liquor to homeless and indigent residents who were getting drunk in nearby Central Park.

"If there has been anything good about this it's galvanized a bunch of people to come together to deal with this," said Raymond Gorman, President and CEO of Community Mental Health Affiliates, which is sponsoring two local TIPS (Training for Intervention Procedures) classes for people who sell and serve liquor.

The two two-and-a-half-hour classes will be held Friday, Aug. 15, at the New Britain Public Library. The first class, which begins at 9 a.m., is for "off premise" businesses that sell alcohol to go, such as package and grocery stores. Attendees will learn strategies on how to prevent selling to minors and intoxicated persons.

The second, "on premises" program begins at 1 p.m. and is geared toward teaching responsible service to restaurants, bars and other establishments.

Participants in the classes must RSVP by Friday to liaisonsaac@aol.com to attend.

Community Mental Health Affiliates' Substance Abuse Action Council is presenting the program in conjunction with the Mayor's 10-year Plan, New Britain Building Hope Together Program.

The TIPS training was suggested during a task force meeting called by Mayor Erin Stewart July 15 to address issues related to homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse.

"One of the things highlighted were the people in town with liquor permits and how they were selling, Stewart said.

"It was a big topic of concern. We were able to provide this training through CMHA which had received funding for community awareness programs."

The Mayor's 10-year Plan and CMHA plan to host similar classes geared toward the business and faith-based communities to increase awareness of mental health and substance abuse issues when dealing with loitering or when volunteering.

"They (business people) need to have some comfort level when dealing with mental health issues," Gorman said. "We'll be working with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown District on mental health First Aid training, which will give a general overview of mental health issues."

Dates for the mental health classes will be announced shortly.

Lisa Backus can be reached at (860) 225-4601, ext. 306 or Lbackus@newbritainherald.com.

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