

Community Advocacy and Leadership Forum Scheduled

October 17, 2006

LACONIA: Lakes Region citizens interested in reducing underage drinking in the Lakes Region



by altering the way this problem is viewed in the community are encouraged to attend a learning and discussion session at the NH Community Technical College in Laconia on November 9th from 4 to 8pm. Sponsored by the CoRe Coalition and the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families, this training is open to anyone interested in advocacy and community development.

Says Shannon Swett, the Outreach Coordinator with CoRe , “Alcohol is the number one drug issue facing youth today.”

SHANNON SWETT, the Outreach Coordinator of the CoRe Coalition, holds copies of “Recommendations For Success”, a recent publication from New Futures explaining how New Hampshire can reduce underage alcohol problems. This information includes "environmental" prevention strategies, specific changes to policies and community conditions that will support healthy behaviors. How to effectively introduce these environmental changes within a community is the topic of the Leadership Forum scheduled for November 9th. The CoRe Coalition is a multi-disciplinary collaboration that began five years ago in the Inter-Lakes communities in response to the wide prevalence of underage drinking and drug use. Because of its success with Interlakes youth, CoRe was awarded a five-year federal grant to expand throughout Belknap County. Ms. Swett will be one of the presenters at the Leadership Forum.

Swett explains that this problem cannot be “fixed just by adding one new program or laying the problem at the feet of one group in our community. Instead we need to change the culture in our society that condones and glamorizes underage alcohol use.”

She says that research shows that communities who have strong leaders willing to advocate for changes in the community environment does work. Using this approach, laws and regulations, enforcement efforts, business practices, behavior norms, and messages youth see and hear regarding alcohol are examined and modified in a way “that makes sense for each community.”

Attendees at this November 9th Forum will determine together what changes are needed and possible. They will also gain skills in advocating for these changes.

The four-hour training is free and will include small-group activities. The evening will be facilitated by community-oriented professionals from New Futures, a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization working to reduce underage alcohol problems and to increase access to treatment in New Hampshire through leadership and policy development.

According to Swett, “In order to solve this problem, we need a flood of new energy, interest, and optimism from many people in our communities.”

To participate in this advocacy training, contact the CoRe organization at 524-9204 or CoRe@metrocast.net by November 6th. Additional information is also available by calling the Citizens Council at 528-3185.