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Press Release

Underage Drinking Prevention Conference draws Five police chiefs, town manager, superintendent



Norfolk District Attorney Michael Morrissey, left, hosted a conference on underage drinking prevention strategies recently for police and school officials featuring Dr. Michael Siegel, Secretary of Public Safety Mary Elizabeth Heffernan and, at right, Judge Paul C. Dawley.

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District Attorney Michael Morrissey hosted more than 150 educators and police from across Norfolk County at an all-day conference Sept. 20, 2011, providing strategies to prevent and address underage drinking and other dangerous behavior.

“The time to address underage drinking is before it comes into court as an alcohol-fueled assault, or the car crash that takes a life or causes permanent injury,” said District Attorney Morrissey. “We are trying to help local police and schools to have the best tools to do that.”

Seminars provided strategies for the “High-Risk Season” -- proms and graduations -- Law Enforcement Perspectives on House Parties, the emerging Recovery High School model with insights gained from that population and “Promoting and Supporting Non-Users in Your School.”

“We tried to provide topics that would appeal to, and hopefully help, each of the different groups attending,” District Attorney Morrissey said.

The event, which drew from 23 Norfolk County communities, was also meant to strengthen collaboration among schools, communities, court officials, local law enforcement authorities and social service providers, Morrissey said.

Featured speakers included Mary Elizabeth Heffernan, Secretary of Public Safety and Security, who emphasized the importance of working together to confront this issue, and underscored her agency's commitment to the cause. The Honorable Paul C. Dawley, Regional Administrative Justice for the Administrative Office of the Trial Court, identified some of the substance abuse challenges facing our communities, and outlined how the judiciary has tried to respond.

Participating organizations included the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Caron Treatment Center, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, the American Automobile Association (A.A.A.), the Safe Roads Alliance, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (M.I.A.A.), the Southeast Center for Healthy Communities, Students Against Destructive Decisions (S.A.D.D.), the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts, and the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (A.B.C.C.).

The keynote speaker was Professor Michael Siegel, M.D., M.P.H., of the Department of Community Health Sciences at the Boston University School of Public Health. Dr. Siegel used televised advertisements to illustrate the strategic marketing of alcohol to teens, and called for greater accountability for companies that produce and market alcohol.

The event was funded by a grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and held at the Lake Pearl Luciano's conference facility in Wrentham.