

Coalition reps attend forum

Conference focuses on prevention

Nearly 2700 community leaders from across the nation, and 10 countries, took part in CADCA's 25th annual National Leadership Forum in National Harbor, Md., earlier this month.

Two of those attending the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America forum were Shelly Mowry and Mike Scharnow from the Fountain Hills Coalition.

Mowry is coalition director and Scharnow, editor of The Times, is media sector representative for the coalition.

"The Fountain Hills Coalition, formed nearly five years ago, strives to engage parents, youths, educators, law enforcement and justice officials, civic leaders, workplaces, the faith community and other key sectors to leverage resources and coordinate anti-drug strategies that impact the entire community."

"One of the highlights from the conference for me was Capitol Hill Day," Mowry said.

"We got to meet one-on-one with the Representative David Schweikert, who is a Fountain Hills resident."

"He took the time to hear our concerns about substance abuse and the importance of early prevention."

"From our conversation, it's very clear he understands the importance of the coalition and fully supports our work."

Mowry, who has been involved in drug prevention work for more than a decade, has attended other CADCA forums.

"The CADCA conference is the place for community coalitions to come together and learn from each other," she said.

"I'm amazed every time I attend a conference like this of the number of people and coalitions just like the Fountain Hills Coalition who are doing great things for their communities by helping to reduce youth drug use."

"The conference helps re-charge my batteries with new ideas and strategies to bring back to the coalition and to Fountain Hills."

In addition to hearing from a wide range of national experts and federal leaders, participants honed their substance abuse prevention skills through the 70-plus training sessions.

CADCA's National Leadership Forum is the nation's largest and premier training event for substance abuse prevention and treatment professionals and researchers.

Training sessions addressed some of the most pressing issues facing communities today - from how to prevent prescription drug abuse and marijuana use among youth to how to reduce tobacco use and underage drinking.

Kicking off the CADCA Forum was keynote speaker Michael Botticelli, acting director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Botticelli stressed the importance of drug prevention to solving our nation's substance abuse problems. "Substance abuse prevention must remain an integral part of education, policies and programs if we are to achieve our goals," Botticelli told participants.

"As coalition leaders... you have a powerful voice



Congressman David Schweikert, left, met with Shelly Mowry and Mike Scharnow of the Fountain Hills Coalition during a recent forum held in Washington, D.C.

and are ideally positioned to bring good science, valid data and effective prevention strategies to implement local responses to local drug use issues."

To mark the 25th anniversary of the CADCA Forum, CADCA hosted a historic panel discussion featuring past U.S. "drug czars" Dr. William Bennett, Dr. Lee P. Brown, General Barry McCaffrey and John

P. Walters.

The panel was moderated by award-winning journalist Susan Page, Washington Bureau Chief for USA Today.

Leaders who served under various presidential administrations reflected on how drug issues have changed over the past 20 years and offered recommendations for addressing some of today's most press-

ing drug problems - from marijuana and tobacco to prescription drug abuse.

William Bennett, who was the first ONDCP director under President George H.W. Bush, said the marijuana used by kids and teens in previous decades was much less potent than it is today.

"The science is overwhelming. We're talking about high THC levels - 15-20 percent, sometimes 25-30 percent. We've got to be crazy to throw this stuff into circulation," he exclaimed.

Brown, who served under President Bill Clinton, offered what he believes is the solution to today's teen drug use problem.

"There is an answer (to the drug abuse problem) and the answer is communities working together at the local level...and that is what this organization (CADCA) has been doing for 25 years," he said.

"I am a strong believer that if we mobilize our local resources, we can make a difference."



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